

EIGHTY-SEVEN



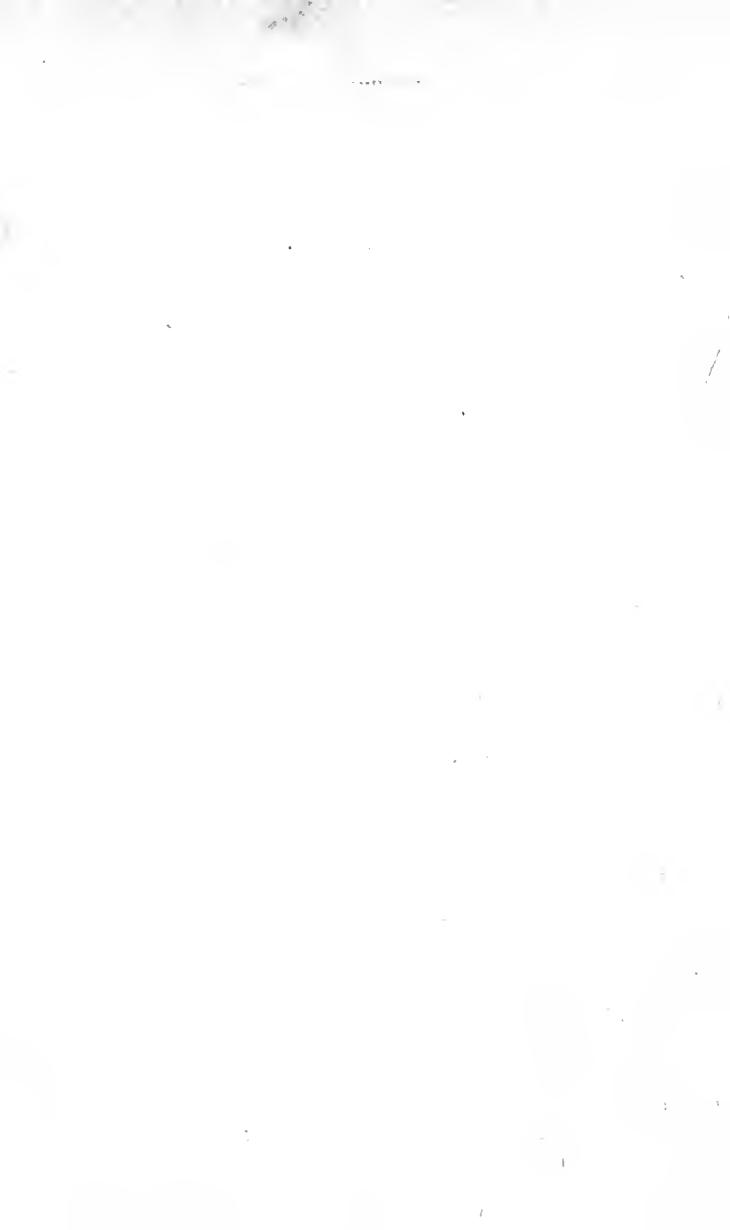
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"VINE WAITED, AND THE FAMILY PARTY DREW NEARER."

EIGHTY-SEVEN

BY
PANSY

AUTHOR OF "CHRISTIE'S CHRISTMAS," "A HEDGE FENCE," "GERTRUDE'S
DIARY," "THE MAN OF THE HOUSE," "INTERRUPTED," "THE HALL
IN THE GROVE," "AN ENDLESS CHAIN," "MRS. SOLOMON SMITH
LOOKING ON," "FOUR GIRLS AT CHAUTAUQUA," "RUTH
ERSKINE'S CROSSES," "SPUN FROM FACT," "LITTLE
FISHERS: AND THEIR NETS," ETC., ETC.

BOSTON
D LOTHROP COMPANY

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PREFACE.

CLASS OF '87: GREETING!

DEAR CLASSMATES:

Having journeyed through the years together, and accomplished the four years' course of reading, as we are now about to part company, I come to you with the promised book dedicated to "Our Class."

I have taken great pleasure in writing it, and hope most earnestly that it will be to you a pleasant souvenir of our Alma Mater.

Perhaps just here is the appropriate place in which to thank many hundreds of you for the helpful letters which you sent to aid me in the preparation of *our* book. That they were decided helps, you, the writers, have only to read the book, to be convinced; for the incidents found therein were taken from your own letters, which contained statements of facts. I have simply grouped within a few lives, the actual experiences of many. It was my earnest desire to write a book for the '87's which should, in a slight degree, at least, illustrate the manner in which helping hands might be

PREFACE.

extended by members of the C. L. S. C., reaching lives where they least expected, and setting in motion influences which should tell for eternity. It is not the least of my pleasures that, in writing this book, I have been able to leave the region of plain fiction and revel in the realm of facts. It is delightful to be able to say to you, that wherever you may chance to find suggestive hints through the book as to ways of helping, you may understand that it is not theory, but practice; not what might possibly be done, but what has been done, by the members of the class of '87; though, in order to make the dates of my story symmetrical, I have been obliged to remove many of the doings of the '87's back into the past, thus apparently giving the honor to the classes of '84, '85, and '86, which properly belong to the '87's. But this you will understand.

And now, trusting that we who gather in the classic groves of the Mother Chautauqua may have the honor of passing through the golden gate together; and hoping and praying that not only we who gather there, but all the great company of those faithful ones who must of necessity abide at home, may meet one day, and pass under the flowery arches of our Father's love, through the golden gate of the Celestial City, "to go no more out forever," I subscribe myself,

Yours, in the Master's service and reward,

PANSY.

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EIGHTY-SEVEN.

CHAPTER I.

EIGHT AND TWELVE.

THEY were both barefooted, and, to all intents and purposes, bareheaded. She carried in her hand a much-faded, little old-fashioned sun-bonnet, the strings of which had been chewed a little, and then smoothed out, as though the chewer were penitent. He tossed carelessly from hand to hand, or occasionally pitched a long way ahead of him, a much-soiled, much-torn, nearly rimless straw hat. Her dress was of faded pink calico, and was rapidly growing too short, as to sleeves as well as skirt; it was clean; that is, comparatively, but the elbows were much patched with material which had not faded, and the effect was marked. As to the boy's attire, perhaps the least said about it the better. That he was outgrowing it in all directions, that it tore on the slightest provocation, and that there was no careful hand to patch and sponge and brush for him,

were self-evident truths. However, neither of these, to judge by their faces, took much thought for clothes. They sauntered along the sometimes sandy, sometimes grassy, lakeshore, stopping quite often to dig with their bare toes attractive-looking holes in the damp sand, or to shy a pebble at a darting fish; between times they talked; grave, old-fashioned talk, some of it, revealing by the very words in which they expressed themselves that already some of the shadows of life's stern realities had fallen on them. Yet some of the talk was childish in the extreme, indicating the constant bubbling forth of youth and light-heartedness, despite the weight of some burdens.

"It's pretty here," the girl said, stopping suddenly to look up to the very top of one of the grand old trees, stretching her neck back, and shading her brown eyes from the sun's rays, and looking up and up beyond the trees into the blue sky, dotted here and there with delicate, filmy clouds. "I think it is just lovely through here. And I think this is a lovely day; it always is nice on my birthday. Isn't that queer? Mother says she doesn't ever remember my having a rainy birthday."

They had left the lake now, and climbed one of the hills, where the trees were tall and so close together that their branches interlocked, forming lovely arches for the sun to glorify.

"It is very nice," the boy said, simply, in answer to his companion, but whether he meant the place,

or the birthday, or the fact of there always being sunshine on that day, he did not explain.

The little girl was full of the thought: "This is my birthday walk, you know. Isn't it nice that you could take it with me, and that we could come way out here to the spot I like the best? Mother won't let me come alone. She is afraid of bears, or snakes, or something; I ain't afraid"—with fine superiority lighting up her great brown eyes—"but then she is a woman, you know; and women always get afraid of things; I wonder why?" Dreamy silence for half a minute, while she tries to settle this problem, then she is off again: "O, Win! we had a talk this morning, mother and I—a kind of birthday talk. Mother said when she was a little girl she liked the woods, and the trees, and everything, just as I do. And she meant to study and learn all about them; out of books, you know, but she couldn't. Grandfather got very poor, and then he got sick, and then he died, and then grandmother died, and there was nothing but trouble, mother said, for years and years. O, wouldn't it be dreadful to have one's mother and father—O, poor Win, I am so sorry! I didn't think. And it was mean of me; I ought to think."

"Never mind," said the boy, struggling with a sort of choking feeling, which he did not himself understand. "I don't remember any mother at all, but I do father, just a little. Go on; I like to hear about it."

"Well, I'll skip all the hard, and tell you when mother was twenty-two years old. That was her happy day, she said. She was married to father the day she was twenty-two. But, dear me! I wouldn't like to be married as mother was! Just in a kitchen, and with her old calico dress on, and no cake, nor anything; and nobody to kiss her and cry. I told her I thought somebody always cried about brides. I read it in a story-book once; but she laughed at me, and said there was nobody to cry over her; only herself, and she did, a little, for joy. She was so glad to go away from that place; they didn't belong to her, and they didn't care for her, any of them. I'd have been glad, too, to go with father, you know. Mother said when I was twenty-two, she would give me a happy day if she could; a regular feast day. I said maybe I would be married on that day, just as she was; and she laughed again, and said then she would do the crying, maybe. Isn't it queer to think that if I live, one of these days I'll be twenty-two?"

"That's a long way off, Vine."

"Not so very. I counted it up with mother this morning. Mother's birthday and mine come the same time; isn't that nice? Mother is forty years old to-day. Mustn't it seem strange to be forty years old? I'll tell you what year I will be twenty-two; it will be eighteen hundred and eighty-seven."

"Then we'll write it," said the boy, "on this old

tree," and he took from a ragged pocket a battered and bruised jackknife, with two broken blades, and with much patience and care cut into the jagged bark of one of the great trees the inscription :

"Vine, 22, 1887."

"It is a good many years to wait," said Vine, reflectively. "It looks more when it is printed out. I wonder what mother will do to celebrate it? I told her I wanted a cake, and some baked potatoes; and, Win, I said I wanted you to come to tea. Oh! that reminds me; it is very queer I forgot it; I'm going to have a little bit of a tea-party to-night. No cake," shaking her head gravely, "because eggs are so dear, you know, but the potatoes will be lovely. I picked them out myself, and washed them before I came away; nice big ones, all of a size, and you are to come to supper, Win, this very night."

"I can't," said the boy, gloomily. "It was almost as much as my head was worth to get off for this walk. I've worked like sixty ever since daylight — before daylight, for that matter — to get this chance, and if I'm not home before milking-time, I wouldn't give much for my skin."

"O, poor Win! I say it is too mean for anything!" and the brown eyes blazed. "And you can't come to my birthday, after all, when there's a potato picked out for you, and washed, and everything, and mother has a little treat in a dish; I don't know what it is, but it will be nice? O,

Win! couldn't you; wouldn't they let you, just for my birthday?"

The boy gravely shook his head.

"They don't care a thing about birthdays, and they'd rather disappoint me than not, any time."

His face was growing hard over the thought. Stern lines about the mouth, and an angry sullenness in his eyes; but Vine's brown eyes were brimming with tears, and, seeing this, he instantly turned comforter.

"Never mind, Vinie, it won't be so very long to wait. I'll come to the other supper; no Mr. Josiah Griggs in all the world can keep me from it; just think, Vinie, I'll be twenty-six years old!"

"A great tall man," said Vine; "as tall as father. Oh! how funny to think of;" and she laughed out gleefully. At eight years of age tears and laughter may come very close together. "But I don't want to wait;" and already the voice was growing tremulous again. "I might not like you nearly so well, you see. Perhaps I might even be afraid of you. Will you wear a collar that stands up all around, do you suppose, like Deacon Slo-cumb's? Oh! and will you have whiskers over your face? And I'll call you Mr. Winter, I suppose; or Mr. Kelland. That is the way they do. O, Win, how very funny to think of it all! I could never say 'Mr. Kelland;' do you believe I could? Win, why did your mother give you such a queer name? My mother was wondering about

it the other day. She said she never heard of anybody named Winter before."

"Father named me," said the boy, a tender sadness spreading over his face, such as always came when he spoke the names "father" and "mother." "He said mother dreaded the long winter so much, and she never lived to see it. She thought so much about it, that he gave me the name, because it make him think of her, and because she escaped."

This last was added in an undertone, as though it were a thought beyond little Vine. She was considering the matter, though, with her head dropped a little to one side, like a canary-bird's. It was a pretty, thoughtful way she had.

"I like winter," she said, at last. "I like the snow — it's so white — and the cold, and everything. The evenings are so nice and long, and it is warm and pleasant in our kitchen ; and sometimes we roast apples, and a few times I popped some corn. Then I like to go to school through the snow, and to slide down-hill. O, Win ! won't you and I have fun together next winter ? "

The boy shivered and frowned.

"I hate winter," he said, fiercely. "It is so awfully cold everywhere. The coldest place in the world is our attic. You can't possibly get clothes enough over you to keep from shivering ; at least, I can't, with the clothes I get hold of. If I were manager of the bed-clothes, I'd try for it."

"Mother comes and tucks me in," said Vine,

surveying him with thoughtful gravity, "and then I'm always warm." Whereat the boy laughed almost fiercely.

"Mrs. Josiah Griggs doesn't!" he said, with a toss of his head and a flush on his face.

The troubled thought which Vine had been considering for some minutes now came to the surface in hesitating speech:

"Win, is she — I mean, isn't she — well, is she good to you?"

Whispered, those last words, as though the possibilities they contained were dreadful to think of.

"Oh! good enough," said Winter, with another toss of his head. "I don't have much to do with her, nor she with me, only to scold; but I get used to that. She doesn't do any tucking up, or that sort of thing. And I don't want her to; I'd kick all the bed-clothes off in a hurry that she tucked."

"Yes," said Vine, a little hesitatingly; "I suppose so, because you are a boy."

"It isn't that. It's because — well, because I wouldn't want her to do things that were any like mother's, you know, when she isn't mother, and never can be, and nobody ever wants her to be."

Vine nodded. She could readily understand that a boy would not care to have Mrs. Josiah Griggs for his mother. Winter returned to the subject of schools.

"I don't know about next winter; I don't be-

lieve I'm to go to school. I heard them talking, the other day, Mr. Josiah and Mrs. Josiah, planning work for me which sounded as though it was to take all my time. I don't see where the school is to get put in."

"Oh! but," said Vine, in dismay, "that would be horrid! Why, every boy goes to school in winter. Didn't they promise to you?"

"Yes, of course three months of schooling every year; but promises don't signify. Who's to complain, if they don't keep them? Nobody cares — but a boy, without friends; and they don't care how much I complain. I don't know as it matters. School doesn't amount to much with me, Vine. When a fellow has to work up to the minute for starting, and set to work the minute he gets back, and hasn't books that he ought to study, and gets behind with all his classes, and doesn't understand things, and hasn't time to stop and ask questions, why, school is a kind of a humbug. Except for giving you rides at recess, and taking you home on the sled at night, I don't know but I'd as soon be at work."

But over this decision Vine shook her shapely brown head violently. "O, no! that wouldn't do at all; because you are going to be a man, and I want you to be a real smart man. I'm to call you Mr. Kelland, you know, and every little bit of study helps a little. I couldn't call you Mr. Kelland unless you were a smart man. Now, could I?"

The boy burst into a merry laugh, the first real outburst of boyishness which there had been.

"Why not?" he said. "Aren't people who haven't been to school ever called mister?"

Vine shook her head again.

"O, no! — no indeed; they say 'Win,' or 'Wint,' and 'Old Wint,' when your hair begins to get gray. I wouldn't allow it, Win. This is my name for you while you are a boy; but I wouldn't want to say 'Old Win' ever."

The brightness faded from the boy's face.

"Don't call me Wint," he said; "I hate that name. There is something about your little name for me which sounds pleasant. It makes me feel, once in a while, as though I should win something yet, though everything is against me. But, Wint! Every hateful boy I know yells it out at the beginning or end of some ugly speech; and Mrs. Josiah never pretends to call me anything else."

As they talked, they wandered on through the thickly-matted carpet of brush and twigs, and came out now upon a little clearing, where the grass was greener and a view of the lake could be had, glimmering through the great old trees. Here stood two men, gazing about them with an air of interest.

"I should think this would be a good site," one said, as the children came into view. "I should like to put up a building for them just in this angle."

"Do you suppose it will really amount to putting up buildings?" asked the other.

"Why, of course it will. The association is already formed, and some capital secured. The people who are pushing it command influence and money. Oh! I have no doubt of its eventual success."

"It's a camp-meeting," said Vine, nudging her companion's elbow, to call attention to the talk. "One day we were coming to it, but father was too busy. Mother can't walk so far. I'd like to come; it is such a pretty place. But camp-meetings don't have anything nice for children, do they?"

"No," said Winter; "nothing but sermons, that I ever heard of. But I don't know much about them. Mr. Griggs wouldn't let me come, because he didn't believe in encouraging laziness and late hours. I wonder what they are talking about it now for? It's over for this year."

"Maybe they are going to build a church, or something, and to work at it this winter. It would be fun to come out here once in a while and watch them, wouldn't it, Win? Let's ask them what they are going to build. Do you know who they are?"

"Never saw them before."

"Well, never mind; you can step right up to them and talk, just as though you knew them. Men always do that. Father talked with a man

all the way home from the pasture, the other night, and when I asked who he was, he said he never saw him before."

The boy laughed good-humoredly.

"You have a great idea of making a man of me, haven't you, little Vine? All right; I'll help it along when I can. Here goes."

And the two moved toward the gentlemen.

CHAPTER II.

"MARCH ! I SAID."

WELL, sir," said the elder of the two gentlemen, greeting the young people with a genial smile, "have you come to locate a lot for yourself? These grounds are all to be marked off into building lots one of these days, and streets and avenues cut through to the lake, and all sorts of fine things are to be done. First come, first served; you can have your choice now."

"I'm not quite ready to build yet," the boy answered, in a merry, and yet respectful tone. "What is going to be done, sir? Is it building for the camp-meeting?"

"No; something new under the sun. There's to be a meeting here, but I believe they don't call it a camp-meeting. If I were going to name it, I should say it might be a school; a sort of play school for summer time. A great many things are to be done which do not belong to camp-meeting; that is certain. I heard of illuminations, and concerts, and fire-works, even, planned for. I really can't tell you just what it is, but it is some-

thing which will be pleasant for young folks and old folks, and will be pretty sure to bring them here in quite respectable crowds. I shouldn't wonder if the day were to come when we should see a couple of thousand people in these woods."

"And is there to be a building put up here, sir?"

"Well, that depends on whether the managers of the thing are people of taste," the young man answered, with a genial smile. "It is the place above all others which I would select for some sort of building; wouldn't you?"

"It is the prettiest spot anywhere around," said Vine, clasping her hands together in a sort of little ecstasy of delight, and forgetting the presence of strangers, as she seemed to take in anew the beauty spread around her.

Both gentlemen turned and looked at her.

"So it is, little lady," said the one who had done the most of the talking. "The very nicest place in these woods; you are a lady of taste, I perceive. Suppose you select a lot at once, and let me put you up a building? Come, now, there is nothing like being energetic in these matters."

Vine laughed gleefully.

"I should like it," she said; "a little house, large enough for Dolly and me; oh! and a room for you, Win, to come and visit us; and a room for father and mother."

"Exactly," said the would-be builder. "Quite a

house, and I am at your service entirely. I have one building here already contracted for, and I would just as soon look after another at the same time."

But by this time Vine's face had grown thoughtful.

"And will there be meetings here for little girls?" she asked, with a curious mixture of childhood and womanhood in tone and manner, which was very winning.

"Especially calculated for little girls, I should say; in fact, the entire scheme seems to be for the benefit of little girls and little boys; and bigger boys and girls, of course; it would not do to leave them out."

"No," said Vine, gravely. Then, after a pause: "It is very nice; I like to see buildings going up, and people doing things; it is a long time since anything has been done, it seems to me. I'm just as tired of our little old house, and nothing going on, as I can be. I wished we lived nearer, so I could run here and watch it all, getting ready. Wouldn't it be nice?"

All this was addressed to Winter; she had dropped the grown people out of her thoughts. He, on his part, was examining the position of the sun, with a look of apprehension on his face, and the quick words he spoke did not answer her question:

"Vine, I must hurry home just as fast as I can;

look where the sun has traveled. I did not know it was so late; can you skip over the ground very fast?"

"Yes, indeed," affirmed Vine, tying on her sun-bonnet, and holding out her small brown hand, to be grasped in Win's larger one, preparatory to a skip.

The two gentlemen looked after her as she went flying down the hill, being skillfully "jumped" over the rough places by her watchful companion.

"That's a bright little creature," said the younger gentleman; "a regular little woman of business; she would build a house to-morrow if she had her way, and employ me as architect."

"The boy has a good face," said the elder gentleman.

"Yes, rather; a trifle sullen, perhaps; at least there are shaded lines to it; the little girl, now, is open-faced and bright. Well, Edwards, you think you will not locate your lot to-day?"

.....
Meanwhile, the two children lost no time in conversation, but made all speed. The boy frequently cast apprehensive glances sunward, and several times made the remark that he "had no notion it was so late." As for Vine, it took all her breath to keep pace with his rapid strides, and to be ready for his frequent "jumps" over obstructions. At a point where two roads forked they paused for a few seconds, the boy speaking rapidly:

“ I’m sorry I can’t go with you, Vine, but you see how it is ; that old sun has gone and left me ; I must rush with all my might, and then maybe not get there in time. I’m sorry about the potato, too ; there isn’t a fellow in the world who would like to eat it so well as I ; but it will have to wait. When you are twenty-two, you know, it is to be ready.”

“ O, dear ! ” said the little girl, with a half laugh, half sigh. “ Think of waiting fourteen years for a potato ! I hope we’ll eat bushels of them together before that time. The very first night that you can come, Win, I mean to ask mother to let us have some. Good-by ! ”

The last word was shouted ; for Winter had not waited until the close of her sentence ; he was already climbing the hill up which his road led, and he shouted back the “ good-by ” as he reached the top, and broke into a run. The little girl looked after him until his fleet feet were lost in the distance, then turned, and sped away in the opposite direction:

An hour afterwards she was arranging some much-chipped plates on a coarse, worn table-cloth, setting them skillfully, in a way to hide the worn places as much as possible, and talking with a middle-aged woman, who sewed swiftly in the waning light. The room was a small kitchen ; the woodwork worn, the furniture as scanty as could well be imagined, yet there was something pleas-

ant about it all. The small cook-stove was in order, the singing teakettle was bright, the little kitchen table had been freshly scrubbed, as had the floor, and a general air of holiday attire pervaded the room ; at least, so it seemed to Vine. She sighed a little as she took it all in.

"You make everything so nice, mother, and then Win couldn't come. Wasn't it too bad ? He felt sorry, I can tell you. I guess they never have baked potatoes nor anything else nice and pleasant where he lives. O, mother ! I told him about our talk this morning, and he said he'd be sure to come to supper the day I was twenty-two. Wouldn't it be real queer if he should ? And we are to have baked potatoes, and something nice ; some treat, you know, for a surprise. I wonder what the treat is for to-night ? It doesn't seem as though I could wait ! Do you suppose father will be late to-night ? O, mother, they are going to have something new down at the Point ! Houses and things, and a big meeting next summer for children. Won't that be nice ?"

"For children ?" repeated the mother, as Vine paused to take breath ; also to determine, with her head dropped a little to one side, whether the apple-sauce should stand at just that angle, or a little more to the centre.

"Well, of course, it's for grown people, too ; but the man said there would be things especially for children."

"Why, they have a camp-meeting there every summer, child."

"Oh ! but this isn't a camp-meeting ; isn't a bit like one ; the man said so. He said they would have concerts, and fireworks, and animals, you know ; I guess he said animals, I don't quite remember. It is going to be very nice. Don't you suppose father could take me once in awhile ?"

Now it was the mother's turn to sigh.

"I don't know, Vinie," she said, gently, the swift needle pausing a moment while she looked at the child. "I'm afraid there isn't much chance for father to take you anywhere in a good while, or do any of the things he would like to do. Poor father is having a hard time ; there's been trouble since you went away. Old Brindle is dead."

"Old Brindle dead !" repeated Vine, in a voice which was full of anxiety and alarm ; and she set down the little sauce-plates she was bringing, without regard to whether they were in just the best position or not. "Why, mother, how did it happen ? Who told you ? Does father know ?"

"Father came himself and told me, on his way to the upper lot. She got hurt in the new wire fence below the meadow ; so badly hurt that they had to kill the poor creature in mercy. I wasn't going to tell you, Vine, dear, to-day, since it was your birthday, but then I thought father would not be likely to feel very gay, and if you understood the reason, you wouldn't wonder over it."

Vine sat down on a low chair, which was her special property, wrapped her two hands in her neat work-apron in a queer, little, old-fashioned way she had, and looked mournfully before her.

"What are we going to do?" she said, at last. "Mother, how can we get along without Brindle?"

The mother shook her head, and sewed swiftly again, without speaking for some minutes, then she said :

"I don't know, Vine, I am sure ; it is of no use to borrow trouble, and I suppose we shall get along somehow ; we always have, but the winter looked hard enough before this.

Vine sighed again.

"There is a very great deal of trouble in the world," she said, gravely. "I thought a little while ago Win had it all, and here it is spread around ; but we haven't as much as he's got. Just think, mother, he has nobody who truly cares whether he has pleasant times or not."

"Yes," the mother said, that was trouble ; and it was very sensible in Vine to remember that she was better off than some other people ; and she must be as pleasant as she could when father came, and not mind if he looked a little sober ; they would manage, somehow, perhaps something new would happen to-morrow ; something pleasant ; who could tell ?

"Yes," said Vine ; "maybe it will have to do with the new things down at the Point. What if

father could get work there; steady work, and they would pay him real well, so that he wouldn't need old Brindle. Wouldn't that be nice?"

The mother shook her head again, but she smiled on the child, and felt comforted, she hardly knew why. And the potatoes were done to a nicety, and Vine knelt on the clean floor, and took them out one by one with careful hand, giving each a little scientific squeeze before she plumped it into the dish; and the father's step was heard outside, and they planned to be happy and keep the birthday feast.

It was just at this moment that Winter Kelland set down two pails of foaming milk in Mrs. Griggs' kitchen, and waited to lift them one at a time for Mrs. Griggs to strain. There was an ominous frown on that lady's face; she had been waiting twelve minutes and sixteen seconds, by the great solemn kitchen clock, which reached from floor to ceiling, and spoke in measured tick-tock tones, and never made mistakes.

Winter said not a word, neither did she. In fact, not a word had she spoken since he reached the door, breathless with haste, an hour before, and said, in most apologetic tones, "O, I am so sorry to be ten minutes late! I will hurry with all my might." Then he had seized the pails and vanished. No word from Mrs. Griggs; neither then nor now. What did it mean? Winter lifted the pails, then carried them emptied, to the sink,

and pumped cold water into them ; then brought armful after armful of nicely split wood, and piled the box high, carefully brushing up the little dirt he had made by the operation, and stood at last before the fire, waiting for orders, his chores all well done, though he had been ten minutes late. In the meantime, Mr. Josiah had come in, and taken his seat in the corner behind the stove, weekly newspaper in hand.

"Josiah," said Mrs. Griggs, in warning tone, while Winter waited, having spoken only to ask respectfully if there was anything else he could do, and having received no answer.

Josiah laid down his newspaper, slowly took off his glasses, folded them, dropped them into the leather case, placed the case in his pocket, and fixed a pair of cold eyes on Winter.

"Are you through?"

"Yes, sir ; I have the chores all done, as usual."

"Have you locked the old barn and fastened the bars for the night?"

"Yes, sir ; I have done everything."

"What time did you get home to-night?"

"I was ten minutes late, sir ; I was up on the hill in the woods, and the sun was hidden by the trees, and I did not know it was so late ; but I ran every step of the way, and was just ten minutes behind time."

"A very conscientious and punctual boy ! The sun ought to have waited for you. I am surprised

at it for going down at the right time, when you didn't know it was going."

No reply from Winter; only a slight deepening of the glow on his cheeks which haste and exercise had produced.

"Is there anything ready for me to work at just now, sir?" he asked, at last, seeing Mr. Griggs resolved apparently to gaze at him, and say nothing.

"Yes, sir, there is. You may march up to the attic and take off your jacket, and I'll walk up after you, and see if I can teach you that being ten minutes late is not being punctual; and that you are to come home at the minute you are told, whether the sun sets at an hour to suit you or not."

"But Mr. Griggs" —

"March! I said. I don't want any words. You've got plenty of words any time; what you lack is action."

The spot glowed fiery red on Winter's cheeks now, but he turned without another word, and, opening the door leading to his attic room, ran swiftly up the steep steps, followed by the slower Mr. Griggs.

CHAPTER III.

IN SEARCH OF HOME.

THE stars were just gathering thick in the sky when the back door of Mr. Josiah Griggs' house opened softly, and a boy with the traditional bundle in his hand — not, however, "tied up in an old pocket handkerchief," but done very clumsily in stiff brown paper — came out, looked about him cautiously for a moment, closed the door as softly as he had opened it, and struck off at a brisk pace down the road.

At last he had carried out the threat so often made to himself, and deliberately planned to run away.

You are not to suppose that he was the usual boy who had been reading dime novels, and planned a runaway after their pattern, as the most interesting thing he could do with his life. Dime novels were as scarce in Mr. Griggs' house as were all other sorts of reading. I am not sure that young Kelland had ever even seen one; nor, if he had, would his tastes at that time have lain in their direction. The simple fact is, that his life had

been so hard and loveless in every respect since he went from the county poorhouse to Mr. Griggs' home, that the wonder was he had not run from it long before. If the actual truth could be reached, I am inclined to think it would have been found to be little Vine's influence which had held him until this time.

But to-night's punishment had been the drop too much for him. It was not that it had been so very severe, though the blows' with the strong leather strap were hard enough, and had fallen in rapid succession, Mr. Griggs growing more vexed every moment because of the lad's "stubbornness," as he mentally named Winter's stern determination not to cry out, "if the pain killed him." Still, it was not the pain, but what he had conceived to be the bitter injustice of the whole thing, which smarted in Winter's heart and made him finally resolve to endure no more. Why should Mr. Griggs' declare that, unless he, who had no watch, no way of telling the time save by guessing at it, were back from his long-worked-for half-holiday at exactly five o'clock, he should be whipped? What harm was done to any one by his being ten minutes later than that? His work was as carefully done as usual, nothing had suffered, and he had explained and expressed his sorrow for the mistake in time. "Would any decent man have whipped me for it?" This was the question which Winter had muttered to himself as, left in

the darkness and ordered to bed, supperless, he had gone swiftly about, not undressing, but gathering the few poor clothes he possessed, and making them into that disreputable-looking bundle. This done, he had time for reflection ; because it would never do to start so long as Mrs. Griggs' candle was flashing from kitchen to pantry, throwing gleams of light across the roadway.

Mrs. Griggs' eyes were sharp ; it was not easy to evade them. Reflection in this case did no particular good. I am not sure that it so much as entered Winter Kelland's mind that there was anything morally wrong in the step which he had decided to take. He considered himself in nowise bound to Josiah Griggs. True, he had been taken by him from the poorhouse, and certain conditions had been entered into between the authorities and himself. Just what those conditions were, Winter neither knew nor cared. He had been grateful to the people in the county house for keeping his dreary childhood from starvation ; he had been more than grateful to poor old half-witted Mother Dorkins, one of the paupers, who used to pat him on the head, and now and then tuck a bit of red shawl about him, which she wore on her shoulders ; once she sat down on a box by his bed and said :

"They say prayers when they go to bed, good little boys do, who live in houses. This is what they say : 'Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray thee, Lord' — I forget the rest, but that is long

enough for you, Winnie ; you don't live in houses, you know ; say it every night, that's a good boy."

And then she had put her withered old face down to his, and done what I suppose would have made you shudder : kissed the boy on his round, hard, not overclean cheek with her skinny lips.

Winter had loved Mother Dorkins ; and he had said those half lines over and over many a night after that ; and he had cried bitter tears on the day when they carried Mother Dorkins away in her rough box to that portion of the burial-ground set apart for paupers. But being grateful to the authorities for keeping him from freezing and starving when he was a little boy, and weeping bitter tears over the rough coffin of his one friend, in no sense bound Winter Kelland to endure any more of Mr. and Mrs. Griggs than he chose ; at least, so reasoned the untaught boy. Mr. Griggs was to give him food and clothes, and a certain amount of schooling, in return for his work each day. Very well. Now suppose he chose to give up the food and clothing, and the schooling, and do no more of the work each day ; was not that perfectly fair and square ? It did not once enter the boy's mind that it was not. Then why did he run away ? Why not walk away in broad daylight, having said to Mr. Griggs that he had grown weary of his side of the bargain, and wanted to try another side of the world ? There was one simple reason. Winter Kelland knew — none knew bet-

ter than he — that the food which Mr. Griggs furnished him was poor in quality and meagre in quantity, and the clothes were cast-off garments of his own ; and he also knew that the work he did was such as would have to be paid fair wages for, to a hired boy : wages enough to get him the books he needed, and a pair of second-hand boots, besides ; he knew all about it, for he was on sufficient terms of intimacy with two hired boys in the neighborhood to have learned these facts long ago.

What was more probable, in view of this, than that Mr. Griggs should be unwilling to close his side of the bargain, and should have ways and means of compelling him to stay until he was a man ? Not that Winter imagined he could have any right to do this ; but, as he had told Vine, who was there to complain for *him* ? You see the process of reasoning ? He had simply resolved to do what he had half resolved upon, many times before — take matters into his own hands, and support himself, without any of Mr. Griggs' old clothes.

Certainly he had earned the clothes he wore, and the clothes he carried in his brown paper bundle ; he was more than sure of this ; but, to be strictly honest, he had, after standing for full five minutes with a half-worn jacket in his hand, the newest article he possessed, hung it back again on the nail with a little sigh and an outspoken :

“ No, I won't take that ; they might not think I had earned it. I *have*, five times over : but *they*

might not think so ; they might even call it *stealing!*” Here the boy’s lip had curled derisively.

“I’ll leave it for the next boy who sleeps up here ; I hope he won’t be colder than I have been ; and he’ll earn the jacket without any doubt, before he has been here very long.”

And now, despite the full hour which he had for reflection, he has closed the back gate for the last time, and walked swiftly away from the house which has been supposed to be his home for two years. At the slope of the hill he pauses and takes a long, lingering look at a clump of trees, behind which he knows stands a little red house, in the back room of which at this moment his one friend, little Vine, is quietly sleeping.

“Poor little Vine !” he murmurs. “I’m afraid she’ll be awfully disappointed ; and there’s no knowing what they will say about me ; she’ll hear it. I wouldn’t go if I could help it, just for the sake of her rides this winter. But I don’t believe they meant to let me go to school ; and if I did, there would be no time for anything ; no, I’d better do it this time ; but I wish I could have seen Vine and had a little talk with her first. I wonder if the potato was good ? My potato. Poor little Vine ! Never mind ; I can’t help it now. She’ll get over it ; they’ll tell her some stuff about me ; and she will be ashamed that she took a walk with me. I don’t care. I’m done with this part of the world forever ; now I’m gone.” And he broke

into a run in the opposite direction from the little red house.

I haven't presented him in a very flattering light, now, have I? O, dear me, no! I don't pretend to justify him; as if one could justify all the doings of boys of twelve; even when they are sheltered by Christian homes, and watched over by careful fathers and mothers!

Yes, I know all about the unwisdom of writing stories of boys who run away from places where they ought to stay; who "try to shake off proper restraint, and strike out in the world for themselves." It is a dangerous precedent; an unwise beginning, and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred *can* have, and ought to have, only a bad ending.

I know all that; but what is going to be done? I want to write Winter Kelland's story just as it is, and he was bound out to Mr. Josiah Griggs until he was twenty-one,—though that part he did not understand,—and he *did* run away.

An unwise beginning? You need not fear that Winter Kelland will ever advise it from his experience. It would certainly be hard to have a worse time than he endured in the years which immediately followed this beginning. Many a time he actually wished for his bed in Mr. Griggs attic, and his place at Mrs. Griggs' kitchen table. Nevertheless, the fact remains that he ran away.

Neither do I wish to be understood as picturing Mr. and Mrs. Griggs as monsters of cruelty.

They were not. I do not think it entered the minds of either of them that they were ever cruel. They were hard, and cold, and cross, and unlovely in all possible ways toward the homeless, friendless boy; yet neither of them imagined that such was the case. They did not love him, certainly. Bless your absurd heart! is it to be supposed that *love* is included in the indentures of a bound boy? Why, of course, the Bible says, "Love thy neighbor as thyself," but then, that is not to be taken literally; it means — why, it means — well now, of course it is absurd to say one can love a boy from the poorhouse; beside Winter Kelland wasn't their neighbor. "Enough to eat?" Of course he had! Boys were enormous eaters; trust them for getting enough anywhere. What if the potatoes were generally cold; whoever knew a boy to care whether things were cold or hot? Suppose his meat was the tag ends, too tough for chopping. Boys had good teeth and enormous digestive organs. Lonesome eating alone in the back kitchen, potatoes in a tin basin and meat in the spider in which it was fried? Stuff and nonsense! Why, the boy was brought up in the poorhouse!

Oh! they did not by any means intend to be unkind. Even the vigorous whippings which Mr. Griggs bestowed on the slightest provocation,—and Mrs. Griggs rarely rested until she had found provocation,—were given under the dim idea that all boys had to be whipped; that it was part of a

man's duty, if he was to bring up a boy, to be ready with the rod in season and out of season. Of course, boys must be found fault with, and scolded, and threatened, and the threats persistently carried out; how else were they to be made industrious and honest and manly? Such was Mr. Griggs' honest creed. Such had really in his own home been *his* bringing up to a great degree.

Shades of tenderness which belonged to fatherhood and motherhood had occasionally, it is true, fallen to his lot, and he remembered them now with a smile, as excusable weaknesses which belonged more especially to mothers; of course, Mrs. Griggs was not Winter Kelland's mother, nor was he his father; yet they must try to do their duty by him. And honestly, in their hard, curious way, they did it. Mr. Griggs did it better than his wife. For he, though severe, meant to be just. But the boy, with his quick-wittedness, his keen insight into meannesses, and motives, and his saucy tongue, and saucier smile, often angered the woman until she felt that she could not endure him; could not be patient with him, even if it were her duty to be; and she never imagined that it was; patience often spoiled boys, so she thought. What they needed was discipline. She had no boy, poor Mrs. Griggs! you are not to blame her too severely; she knew nothing of the "weaknesses" of motherhood.

So now we have our boy, with all his follies and

weaknesses, and honest mistakes, launched on the world for himself ; and Mrs. Josiah Griggs is left behind to deplore it. *She* does not give him credit for honesty. Winter is right in some of his calculations : Mrs. Josiah talks ; she calls the boy “ungrateful,” “false,” “mean,” “sneaking,” all the choice words which she can recall from her repertoire of language.

In the early twilight of the Monday afternoon which followed, for I have also to own that it was on a Saturday night when Winter started on his travels ; surely a well-intentioned boy might have waited until Monday night. But I ought to say in excuse, or at least in explanation, that his manner of spending the Sabbath in Mr. Griggs’ home would not have seemed to him any more religious,—had he known anything about religion,—than to tramp over the fields in search of a new life.

On the Monday afternoon following, therefore, came Vine home from the country schoolhouse where she daily trudged ; where she fondly hoped, as soon as the winter term set in, to trudge back and forth part of the way with her one friend among the boys, and dropped a broken-hearted heap in her little chair in front of the one where her mother sat and sewed ; and placed her little dinner-basket on the floor and her head in her mother’s lap and sobbed as though her heart would break. No brindle cow or other common trouble to account for such tears as these. To

the alarmed mother's questions she finally sobs forth her tale of woe :

"He's gone, mother ; run away ! He went Saturday night ; and nobody knows where he is ; and Mrs. Griggs says such hateful, *hateful* things ! She says he stole himself ! As if *she* owned him ! Mean old thing ! She says he was sly and a cheat ; and oh ! I don't know all her mean, bad words. I *hate* her, mother."

"Elvina !" says the startled mother, her voice full of astonishment, sorrow and reproof.

"Well, but, mother, it is too dreadful ! Win never did anything mean ; and he was just as *honest* ! He wouldn't look in his book in the spelling-class when all the others did ; because he said he would not cheat, if he never got to the head. And the other boys laughed at him and called him 'Goody, Goody.' And now she says all horrid things ! How can I help hating her ? And how can I get along without Win ? He was *my* Win. He was going to help me through the snow ; and we were going to roast apples, and everything. O, mother, mother, what shall I do ?"

Another little maiden heart broken over another boy's mistaken sense of independence.

What matters it that he at this moment sits on a stone thirty miles away, and wishes he were bringing home the milk for Mrs. Griggs to strain. Vine does not know it ; and he will never bring home the milk for Mrs. Griggs to strain again.

CHAPTER IV.

PRACTICING.

HE sat at this moment on a stone, though by no means the one he occupied when you last heard from him. That, you remember, was but thirty miles away from Vine and Mrs. Josiah Griggs and all the familiar surroundings of home-life. More than a thousand weary miles stretch between this stone and that, and the time which intervened could be counted even by years. In point of fact, it was Vine's birthday again, and she had attained the ripe age of eleven years ; and the boy Win was so far changed that he had not thought of it, nor of her, once that day.

There were other changes than this. Three hard years had Winter Kelland tramped over the world ; he was much wiser, in some respects, than when he first tramped away.

I am not going to try to tell you the story of those three years ; it would be unpleasant reading and I do not know that it would accomplish anything to linger over the details. Cold and frost, and snow ; heat and weariness, and discomfort of

every sort ; hunger and rags, and wretchedness ; those words pretty regularly distributed through the months would about make up the story. No, it had not been a pleasant thing to shift for himself. A thousand times during the years, Winter Kelland had discovered a fact which he needed to learn, that, after all was told, he had not been so very badly off in the home of Josiah Griggs. Not so uncomfortably situated but that he might have been, and had been, in worse condition many a time since. He had not planned it in this way ; boys who run away from home never plan it as it works out. He had meant to be very industrious, very energetic, and to accomplish, long before this time, results which would fill the mind of Josiah Griggs with amazement and regret, should he ever come to know the facts. Regret, of course, over his own irreparable loss. But matters had refused to shape themselves in a line with this day-dream. Work had been hard to find ; boys who were unskilled in every sort of work, and who wanted, with their unskilled hands, to earn a good living, were plenty. Mind, I do not say that the condition of things into which he presently fell, was a necessity ; even after a boy has run away, provided he does it as ignorantly and honestly as Winter Kelland did, he may have self-respect and perseverance enough to overcome obstacles and come out ahead. I admit that they generally do no such thing, but it is possible.

At first, Winter had been lofty ; he had resolved to choose his work ; he hated farms, and cows, and milking, and rinsing milk-pails, and all the hundred other duties connected with this life, as he knew it ; he would have no more of farm life. He had a chance to hire out to a blacksmith, but he hated that business even worse than he did farming. So, while he was engaged in being large in his ideas, the days passed, and his clothes grew shorter for him, and grew ragged and soiled, and he grew hungry and grimy-looking, and became, by no means, such a specimen as one would be in haste to hire. Then, the worst, the very worst of it all, was, that the inevitable curse of such a sort of life fell upon him. For a time he rather liked it ; the being his own master ; the getting up at whatever hour he pleased, without the trouble of dressing, and without a responsibility weighing upon him. It was interesting to pass through new towns and cities, to see strange sights, and wonder over crowds of strange people ; to chop a little wood here, for a dinner, and fill a tub or two with water, in another place for a supper. The life had all the charm of novelty and constant excitement. The day began with wondering what queer thing he would see or hear, or do, before it closed. What town should he reach to-day ? Who would give him a lift on the road, with ox team, or mule, or noble span of grays ? He had tried all kinds. What matter if his clothes were growing very

ragged and very short? Nobody knew him, and he would get a chance, by and by, to earn some better ones. So the days passed, and the varying sameness of the life began at last to pall, and the dislike of it grew upon him until he hated it; and he awakened one morning to the thought that he was, by no means, Winter Kelland, a boy who worked for Mr. Griggs, and had a name and a place in the village, and was nodded to occasionally by well-dressed boys who went to the district school with him, and was waited on in stores, promptly and willingly, because he represented Mr. Griggs, a man who could, and did, pay his bills.

Confronting his position squarely, and calling it by its right name, he was just a tramp. And by this time he hated it fiercely, and was ragged and foot-sore and miserable; and had reached the place where he saw no way out. Yet, there was much, even now, that the homeless boy had to be grateful for, if he had only known it. His very friendlessness, combined with his youth, had preserved him from many snares which Satan sets for unwary feet. The brightly-lighted saloons had tempted him many a time, but he was too entirely without money or place or influence, to be harbored within them. Later on, the low-down grog-shops had tempted him, on cold nights, with their smell of warmth; but, by this time he was ragged, and, at best, nothing but a boy, without money or home; and they would have none of him. In fact, it had

just "happened," as we say, that none of Satan's emissaries had found use for him, and he had escaped many things. But for this he had not enough knowledge to be grateful; so, as he sits, this lovely autumn day, on a stone which has been warmed by the afternoon sun, and munches, almost dog-fashion, a bit of hard bread which has been handed out to him from the kitchen in the rear, he is so ragged, so filthy and haggard-looking that Mrs. Josiah Griggs would not have recognized him; neither, I am afraid, would little Vine, and there is not a hint on his face that he has anything in life, or ever has had, for which to be grateful.

Perched on the fence at a little distance from him, hands in his pockets and whistling softly, is a young fellow of about his own age, or possibly a trifle older. A young fellow of an entirely different world from his. His Scotch suit of mixed brown fits his trim form as though it had been made, as it has, by a first-class tailor; his linen collar is spotless and shining, and the bright neck-tie at his throat is arranged with careless grace; there dangles from the proper pocket a chain which he fingers at intervals, when he can spare his hands from his pockets, with the easy indifference of one who has been long accustomed to a watch chain; neither does he consult the excellent watch which it guards often enough to indicate fresh possession. They two are typical boys; if the one represents the great homeless, friendless,

unwashed world, the other is a fit presentment of the well-to-do, cultured, happy American home.

Though the well-dressed young man is whistling, it is done with an absent-minded air, as though the familiar words, "My country, 'tis of thee," had very little place in his thoughts; in fact, he broke off in the midst of a line with something quite irrelevant to it:

"I suppose you are rather hungry?"

"I s'pose I am."

This reply Winter made, after indulging in a somewhat prolonged stare at the questioner; then he took another enormous bite of the hard bread.

"What part of the world do you live in?"

"All parts, and nowhere in particular; I don't live at all."

"What do you do, then?"

"Tramp."

"Do you like that sort of thing?"

"What sort of thing?"

"Why, tramping, and not living at all."

"S'posing I didn't?"

"Why, then, I wouldn't do it if I were you."

"Humph! Do you always stop doing the things you don't like?"

"Generally speaking, yes; unless I ought to like them; and then I set about doing it; but I shouldn't suppose there was any particular question of conscience about keeping on with your occupation. Why, you must be fifteen or so."

“What if I am?”

“Nothing; only if that’s the case, in another year you’ll be sixteen, you know; and that sort of thing will keep going on until you’ll wake up some morning and find yourself a man, and not be quite ready for it.”

“Why’ll I need to be any more ready for that than I am to be a boy and a tramp?”

“Oh! because you’ll have a man’s life to live; a chance to vote, you see, and help settle questions, and somebody to take care of, most men do; and it takes a good deal of getting ready, I should think. I wouldn’t like the kind of life you’re living; it might do very well for a lark; but to keep on wearing such clothes and eating dry pieces of bread, instead of having a place at a table, and living like folks, wouldn’t be my idea of a good time.”

“And you think all a fellow has to do when he doesn’t like old clothes and dry crusts is just to put on some good clothes and sit down like other folks to nice tables, eh? Very well, I’m agreed; bring on your clothes and I’ll wear ’em; and I’ve no objection in life to roast beef and plum pudding.”

“Then, as I said before, if I were you I’d plan for them; they’re to be had for the working, you know.”

“Are they? Show me a place where they pay for a job of work in roast beef and plum pudding, and I’m your fellow; I’ll do the work in a jiffy.”

"Oh ! you know what I mean ; it isn't the one job, nor twenty jobs, it is getting ready for things ; studying and working your way up, and getting your place in the world ; getting where you can manage the plum pudding business for yourself, instead of taking what other people choose to give you."

"I say," said Winter, bestowing a long, grave stare on the speaker, "what business do your grandchildren follow? You must have several of them. You are well on toward a hundred years old yourself, aren't you?"

If his intention was to silence the boy by making him angry, he failed; a good-natured laugh was the only reply; then, after a moment's silence, the boy on the fence spoke again, pleasantly, yet gravely:

"I should think you would want to be studying; there's a look in your eyes somehow, which makes me think you might be a good scholar."

"What if I could? Maybe I'm looking for a situation this minute - a professor I may be, for anything you know; professor of rags and tags."

The laugh with which the words ended had a bitter note; after a moment he said, in a somewhat more serious tone:

"I look like going to school, don't I?"

"No, you don't; but what I'm saying is, that I would if I were you."

"How do you know you would? It's easy for

you to talk. Look at you and then look at me. Does it take much of a scholar to see the difference between us? How do you know what you would do if you hadn't your father's gate post to sit on and clothes and watches of your father's buying to wear?"

"That is true," said the boy, frankly; "I've got my father to depend on; but then boys who haven't fathers, nor good clothes nor anything, do get to be scholars and accomplish something. I suppose I've no right to say I would do it if I were in your place; but I can tell you it seems to me just as though I would."

"How would you set about it?"

"Why, I'd work; I'd hire out somewhere to do anything; dig or weed, or split wood, or clean out stables, or anything there was to do; and I'd ask to be paid in second-hand clothes, until I had earned enough to dress myself decently; and by that time I would have made myself so useful that they couldn't get along without me; and I'd agree to work for my board and the school-books I needed, and then I'd go to the district school."

"Just so. How much do your board and clothes cost in a year? and how much work do you do before and after school?"

The boy on the gate laughed again. "Oh! it is different with me," he said, pleasantly. "I owned that, at first; I do precious little; and my board costs considerable, to say nothing of my

clothes ; but then, I have a feeling that I *would* do, if there were any occasion. More than that, I know fellows who are doing it. Where I was last August, there was a boy, younger than you, I should say, and he worked for his board and went to school a couple of hours every day, and studied by a torch light in the evening ; and he was smart, I tell you ; he wore very common-looking, patched clothes, and I happen to know he often went without his supper because he was in too much of a hurry to go home and get it ; but he stood at the head of the class, and people talked about him with respect."

"Went to school in August?" said Winter.

"Yes, sir, went to school in August ; it was a summer school, on purpose for busy people ; you could go to it and have your lesson, and then go away and study when you liked, or when you could ; and this boy, Porter his name was, had plenty to do besides studying, and had worked hard all his life ; he was an orphan, and he hadn't had a very comfortable life in any way ; he used to tell me a few things, occasionally ; but he is going to make a man. I heard more than one of the gentlemen who were interested in this summer school say they would like to keep watch of him and see where he came out. 'He'll find his place in the world,' one of them said, 'there's always room at the top, you know ; and he is bound for the top.'"

"Well," said Winter, gravely picking up a few

crumbs of bread which had fallen on the log, and putting them into his mouth, "I wish him success, I'm sure; I hope and trust he'll reach the top; as for me, I'm bound for the bottom; I've suspected it a long time, and this morning I begin to feel sure of it. I'm sorry I can't promise to take your advice; it's a real pity, because I haven't met so kind and grandfatherly a man in a long while; out of respect to your age, and gray hairs, I ought to listen to you, but I'm afraid I can't. You see I know more about some things than you do; the world has changed since you were young; the people to whom you can make yourself so necessary that they can't get along without you, are all dead. More's the pity! But I've proved it over and over again, that there isn't a living being to whom I'm necessary; if you had been looking on at my life for the last year, as I have been, you'd know that there ain't a more unnecessary animal than I am, on this side of the earth; I'm even unnecessary to myself; and when it comes to that, a fellow has got to a pretty pass, you know; or you would know if you weren't so venerable, and the world had not grown wicked since your time."

"There is one thing," said the other, speaking slowly, fixing his eyes steadily on the tramp, as though trying to decide whether or not to speak.

"There's more than one thing; there's a thousand, at least; but what's the one that has tumbled on top of your brains just now?"

CHAPTER V.

OPPORTUNITY.

IT was some minutes before he received his answer; in the meantime, the boy on the fence took his hands out of his pockets and ran the fingers of his left one through his curly hair in a way he had when perplexed or a trifle embarrassed. Should he, or should he not? Would this fellow, who seemed to have no sort of desire to get away from his present position, understand? But, on the other hand, whether he was understood or not, was he not bound to "pass the word along?" Suppose the boy should laugh? When he made that promise to himself, no, to God, under the trees in the starlight, did he reserve a chance to keep silence, if he was afraid somebody would laugh, or even sneer?

Under the trees; how vividly he remembered that August evening! Starlight? More stars it seemed to him than had ever before twinkled down on the old earth; very tall trees casting their shadows, making weird motions on the grass, beckoning somebody somewhere; so it had seemed

to him ; very near him, arranged on a rude stand, had burned a fire of pine knots ; now dying down into almost extinction, then suddenly bursting forth again to illumine so much of the world as the flames could reach. Illumining for the boy the face of one man ; a face which he felt he could never forget. There was something grand in it ; he was no student of human nature—this boy—and did not understand the subtle power which drew and held him toward that face. He understood the voice better ; the great glorious voice which rolled out such a volume of melody as reached away beyond the tops of the tall trees, away beyond moon and stars, even up to the door of heaven. A joyful voice, and yet a solemn one ; strong, brave, solemn words always set to the music which he sang. This boy, who was not supposed to be particularly emotional, felt his nerves thrill with a peculiar sensation, and his breath seemed to come in throbs, when he heard, one moonlight night, just as he reached the top of the hill and was about to plunge down toward the torch-lighted grove, the strong voice roll out the words :

All for Jesus, *all* for Jesus,
All my being's ransomed powers.

It was not new sentiment to him. He had been reared in a Christian home, had been a member of the visible Church of Christ for three years ; had been told in Sabbath-school and from the pul-

pit, and by his mother's voice, times without number, that all his strength, and time, and talents belonged to the Lord ; that he was bound to give account for the way in which he employed every power he possessed. Yet when he heard those words sung by the glorious voice, he stopped and drew in his breath, and shivered as if with sudden chill, and the meaning of the words took hold of him for the first time. " All my being's ransomed powers ? " Who did it ? Who gave their powers of voice and motion entirely to Jesus ? He made a swift circuit of his acquaintances and declared to himself that he knew not one. Did this singer ? he wondered. If not, how could he dare to roll those words up the hill in such majesty as they were coming now ? If they pierced the clouds, as they seemed to do, and reached the throne, did God see that they were only mockery ? He made a sudden resolve to watch that man, to learn all about him that he could ; to discover if he *lived* such words as these or only sang them.

There had been a week of watching before the evening to which his thoughts returned as he sat on the fence ; watching, all unknown to the singer ; when he sang on the platform, when he strolled through the grounds, or loitering under a tree chatted with a friend, when he floated idly over the quiet lake, resting, when he sat in the crowded dining hall at lunch-time, constantly he was under the watch of a keen-eyed boy, who was weighing

his words and ways, and even his laugh, to see if they matched his song. A trying ordeal certainly for a human life ; but the boy, as on the evening in question he watched the face pale and glow again in the changeful light, acknowledged to himself with a thrill of satisfaction and a throb of almost pain, that life and song fitted wonderfully well. Satisfaction, because by this time he had made a hero of the singer, and would not have liked him to fail ; pain because he realized as he had never done before, that he was equally bound with this grand-voiced man to have life and profession correspond ; it *could* be done, for this stranger was doing it ; then *he* must do it too. The thought oppressed him ; frightened him ; what a life to live ! He slipped away under the trees, away from the stand, and the voices, and strolled down toward the lake in the solemn starlight to think over the thought. It happened that the singer also slipped away, and strolled in the same direction, thinking his pleasant thoughts, and humming softly a strain from the song he had just led :

Or if, on joyful wing,
Cleaving the sky,
Sun, moon and stars forgot,
Upward I fly,
Still all my song shall be,
Nearer, my God, to thee,
Nearer to thee.

And so humming he came upon the boy. He

had never spoken to him, never noticed him before ; but now he laid a kind hand on the young shoulder and said :

“That is what we want, brother, isn’t it? To get nearer every day to Him? You belong to Him, don’t you?”

“Yes, sir,” the boy said, promptly enough, but his face flushed, and there came to him almost a guilty sensation. Had he really a right to say such a wonderful thing as that he belonged to God? The wonder of it had never struck him before.

“That is good.” There was such hearty satisfaction in the voice that the boy could not help feeling he had made his questioner glad by his answer. Then :

“Do you know one of the very best ways of getting near to Him? Tell others the story. Point Him out ; be on the watch for an opportunity to introduce your friend.

’Tis joy, not duty,
To speak His beauty.

That is the way you want to feel. It grows on one ; if you take up the resolve to ‘pass the word along,’ you will find it becomes a joy.”

A bell had struck just then ; and the singer had turned suddenly with a bright, parting smile, and taken long strides back toward the torch-lighted stand. And it was of these words the boy was

thinking as he sat on the fence and looked at the tramp on the stone. -Was this an opportunity?

At last he spoke: "There's a thing to remember; that you don't belong to yourself, after all; and are bound to do the best you can with your time, and strength, and everything."

"I don't belong to myself? There you're mistaken, grandfather; if there is a thing I have been made to understand ever since I was a shaver big enough to walk, it was that I did not belong to anybody else in this world; and if I don't belong to myself, either, it's a pretty pass. Then," after a moment's hesitation, in a slightly lower tone, "I haven't got any father to belong to."

"That is what I wanted to tell you; it is what I meant; of course you have God, and he is your Father, you know."

The tramp stared. "I don't know any such thing. Wouldn't it be a queer kind of a father who would have a son tramping around the world as I'm doing? Nowhere to sleep, and nothing to eat, or wear?"

"Well, but you may not be doing as He told you; if He gives you directions that would set all these things straight and you don't obey them, you can't lay the blame on Him, you know."

"You don't know what you are talking about. I've had no directions from anybody, and no hint that anybody in this world or any other world cared a red cent where I went, or what I did, or

what became of me. That kind of thing may belong to fellows like you ; but it does not fit here."

"O, yes, it does fit!" The boy jumped from the fence and stood upright ; his face aglow, his embarrassment gone. He was sure about the opportunity ; and a longing desire to say the right word to this desolate fellow swept over him filling his soul with courage.

"It fits perfectly, and I know exactly what I am talking about. I know God loves you and would like to take care of you ; he has made all the plan, and given directions, and the trouble with you is you haven't looked them up ; if I were you, I would turn over a new leaf and start fresh. You're young enough to catch up, and the directions are plain and easy ; no, they aren't so very easy, they take pluck and patience ; but they are worth doing."

"How do you know? Trying it yourself?"

"Yes, I am ; as true as you live I am. I make a hundred mistakes in a day, and I find plenty of things that take a fellow's pride down ; but I'm trying for it, and I know what I am talking about when I tell you it is the only kind of life worth living ; and as for the directions, why, they are plenty enough, and easy to be understood. A fellow can't read one verse in the Bible without finding —"

He paused suddenly, a troubled, doubtful look spreading over his face.

"I suppose you know how to read?" he said.

A queer smile hovered for a moment over the

face of the young tramp. In an instant he was back in a red schoolhouse, with the hum of children's voices all about him, and with Vine sitting just behind the class and whispering, when he sat down, after reading his verse: "Win, that was read just lovely. I do think you are the b-e-a-u-t-i-f-u-l-e-s-t reader!" His one accomplishment it had been, and he had not thought of it, nor of the little red schoolhouse, for months. His answer was brief and untruthful:

"Oh! I can spell out words, if they aren't too long."

"Well, that will do; some of them are short enough, but it takes a lifetime to practice them. I do really wish you would try it. There's a little book—not a Bible, but verses from it—small enough to carry in your jacket pocket; what if I should give it to you? Would you study out a verse now and then, and try to find some directions in it?"

"Couldn't promise," said the tramp, rising suddenly; "I've lived without directions for so long, it would come tough to work under orders. I wouldn't mind about taking the book; I could *eat* it, you see, if I couldn't read it. It's big enough to bring in a loaf of bread, I dare say, and maybe a herring or two for relish."

The eager look died out of the face of the well-dressed boy. He turned slowly and moved toward the gate. He had tried and failed!

Close to the gate, he turned back again and, drawing from his pocket a tiny book not more than two inches square, handed it to the tramp.

"There it is. I hope you won't sell it for bread. I hope you'll go to work and earn bread, like an honest fellow. I think a great deal of that little book ; Aunt Mary gave it to me, and she is dead ; but I mean to let you have it. Maybe something will come of it."

"Maybe there will. If you don't want it to go for bread, why, we'll say doughnuts, or pumpkin-pie ; I'm not particular."

And with a wicked look in his eyes, and a disheartening smile on his face, the boy reached out a dirty hand for the little book which was held towards him, thrust it into a dirty pocket, and slouched away.

His would-be friend watched him quite down the street and around the corner ; then he opened the gate and went slowly up the walk.

"I tried," he said to himself. "It is the first time I ever attempted to say a word to a fellow I didn't know pretty well ; but somehow it seemed just as though I ought. I guess I did nothing but harm ; and yet I can't help feeling glad that I tried."

He was whistling again before he reached the door of his home. A low, sweet strain, "Nearer, my God, to thee," were the words in his mind.

"He was right," he said aloud, as he opened

the side door. "It does make one feel 'nearer' to try. Even if it doesn't do anybody else any good, it helps a fellow on his own road. 'Tisn't very easy to do, sometimes; it wasn't to-day, I know; but I mean to do more of it."

As for our poor young tramp, he did no whistling. Long before he reached the corner the smile had faded from his face, and, instead, it was seamed with frowns. Strange thoughts had been stirred in his heart by the words of the boy not much older than himself. The utter and hopeless difference between his lot and that of boys who belonged to sheltered homes had often pressed upon him in all its bitterness, bringing always with it a feeling of being ill-treated—of not having had a fair chance in life. He had nursed this feeling until it had grown strong within him. I am not sure that the thought had ever presented itself that he was himself to blame for his friendless, loveless life. He had meant different things when he ran away from Josiah Griggs' farmhouse. He had meant to work, and study, and make a man of himself; but fate had been too much for him. It was never Winter Kelland's fault, but always Fate's.

To-day a mere boy, surely not more than a year older than himself, had thrust aside all such reasoning, without argument, and taken it for granted that this miserable life he led was of his own choosing, and could be turned from at will.

"Much he knows about it!" said Winter bitterly. "I'd just like to change clothes with him, and start him out on a tramp like the easiest of mine, and see what he would think when he had brought up the third or fourth night without anything to eat and not much to wear! He'd find he needed something beside his ridiculous little book to hearten him up. What a precious muff he was, to imagine I'd study this book!"

He laughed again, bitterly — very bitterly, for a boy of fifteen — as he drew out the despised little volume and held it off from him in one thumb and finger, eying it with disdain. What had possessed him to take the tiny book? He was not mean enough to want to exchange it for bread, as he had pretended. He certainly did not want to read it. What motive had impelled him to stretch forth his hand and take what was the boy's treasure, and was utterly worthless to himself?

"I don't know why I did it," he muttered to himself, "but there was something in the young muff's eyes which made me feel as though I couldn't disappoint him by refusing his book. I wonder what the fellow's name is?"

With this wonder in mind he opened the volume, to search for a name on the fly-leaf; but it had no fly-leaf; that had been torn away. The reading began at once, and the very first verse was:

"He that overcometh shall inherit all things: and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

CHAPTER VI.

SOME HALF-WAY THINKING.

THE verse needed no "spelling out"; and it had a very strange effect on Winter. The one tender memory of his loveless life was connected with the word "father." Not that he had had a remarkable father, as the world looks at these things. He was simply an unfortunate, feeble-bodied, discouraged man, who, after struggling with poverty and disappointment of almost every kind, and with bodily pain for years, had at last breathed out his life in a county poorhouse. Yet Winter remembered him as always kind; never merry, rarely smiling, but ever patient and low-voiced, and with a tender touch in his hand.

The boy was young when the grave closed over this one friend, and all his memories of him were fitful; certain scenes shone vividly; a little talk about his mother, an account of the way his unusual name, Winter, came to be chosen; the room, the spot, the attitude, the very tones of voice connected with these talks, seemed to be photographed for him, and perhaps the next half-hour or half-

day would be an utter blank. All the more, perhaps, had he in his earlier years of loneliness cherished these special memories.

Since he became a tramp they had faded, had almost gone from him, indeed ; it had been months since he had thought of his father. But with the verse from the little book, they flashed into prominence again ; and with them the resolves which the small boy, Winter, had made ; first, in his very babyhood, to grow to be a man, just as fast as he possibly could, and take such care of that father as was never given to father before. Then, when the grave had intercepted that care, after the first wild grief was spent, had come to him the resolve to be a man like his father ; a good, kind, brave man. The father, I have said, was in no sense remarkable in this world ; yet I fancy sometimes that, because of the way in which he bore his hard, sad life on earth, he may be considered somewhat remarkable among the angels, and his place may be high ; for aught I know, quite near to the throne ; but to Winter, in his ignorant babyhood, the father was a man to be proud of and to pattern after. That thought makes me pause to wonder whether there are not fathers living now who, so far as their children are concerned, might not better have died and left to those children holy memories softened by childhood and by death. A man to be missed and mourned. That was the position which Winter's

father held in his son's heart. When the first remorseful hours began to come to him, after he awakened to the thought that he was very far away from respectability, there had mingled with it the belief that, if his father had lived, all things for him would have been different. But what could be expected of a boy without a father? Now, as he strode along through the busy street, taking no note of the life about him, the words repeated themselves to his consciousness: "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son!"

God's son! To go to *him*, saying: "Father, what shall I do about this?" and, "What would you advise as to that?" Was there possibly such a relation sustained between the soul and God?

Winter Kelland had not been brought up in a heathen country. He had not been a regular attendant at church, because Josiah Griggs, not being a Christian man himself, had not felt its importance; because his wife, not being a Christian woman, had not seen any reason why they should dress a "charity boy" in fine clothes and send him to church where he could not understand a word of what was being said. Still, he had occasionally gone to church, and heard more and understood more than Mrs. Josiah gave him credit for. A sort of *mind* knowledge; never for a moment applied to the heart or life.

He had been a semi-regular attendant at Sab-

bath-school, where he enjoyed the ministrations of one of those interesting teachers who content themselves with asking : "Where did he now go?" "How long did he stay in that country?" "What place did he next visit?" Thus down the printed list, and, having exhausted the questions and her vitality together, fanned herself, or wrapped her furs about her according to the season of the year, and conversed with her next neighbor, or the librarian, and shook her head severely at her boys when they giggled louder than was discreet. O, yes! Winter had enjoyed opportunities; and, being a bright boy, he knew a great deal more about the *facts* of the Bible than one would have supposed possible. But of what experimental religion was, as lived in the soul, I suppose he was really as ignorant as a Sandwich Islander must have been in the days long gone by.

All day Winter Kelland tramped and thought. The words of the well-dressed boy had taken deeper root than he supposed, and hovered about him through the weary miles. He did not even stop for dinner. His breakfast, though the boy on the fence had spoken doubtfully of it, was much better and more generous in quantity than usually fell to Winter's share; and he was so full of his perplexed thoughts that it was drawing near sunset before the pangs of hunger again roused him to the fact that he must make some plan for the night. Where was he, and what should he try

to do next? The village to which he had come seemed to be large and flourishing; many of the houses were handsome; nearly all of them neat.

"A stuck-up place," said Winter, looking about him with critical eye and an experience born of three years of tramping. "Folks will all be too nice to care whether a fellow starves or not, so that he doesn't do it on their sidewalk. I must hunt up commoner-looking houses than these before I try for my supper. I wonder if" — and there he stopped. Up to this point he had been speaking half aloud, in a sort of muttering tone — a habit which he had acquired by being much alone and lonely. But the conclusion of the sentence was entirely mental. Translated, it would have read: "I wonder if there is really the least use in my trying again for work? I gave that up long ago. Folks won't hire a rag-bag; and a fellow will have to stay in the rag-bag line until he is hired; so there seems to be nothing for it but going on in the same way; and yet" —

He could not have translated the thought which hovered about that "and yet;" something in the well-dressed boy's words and manner, something in the verse from the little book, seemed to have, at least partially, arrested him. He did not understand the power of the Spirit of God, and the fact of his operating on human hearts; he had no knowledge of these subjects which connected his vague half-resolves with somebody's effort and

somebody's prayer for him; yet there was no denying the fact that for some reason he had been set to thinking. It was not rapid thought; it was not defined in any way. Those semi-religious and particular people who are forever harping over conversions being "too sudden to last," forgetting that their criticism limits the power of the Holy Spirit, might have been quite satisfied with Winter Kelland. He was by no means converted; he was so far from it that there was not even a conversion to one small advance step in his life. He was merely dreamily inquiring of himself whether it might be possible, provided he decided to try it, to earn, somewhere, some decent clothes.

He was moving very slowly through the street while he thought, or rather while he let his mind float in this direction; the mental effort was too feeble to justify the name of thought.

A small, neat, white house stood on the next corner. A woman in a trim, plain calico dress, with her hair done into the plainest and tightest little knot behind, stood at the side gate, looking up and down the street with a troubled air. Her eye rested at last on Winter.

"Mercy! what a rag-bag!" This in undertone. Then, to him: "Boy, do you know anything about cows? Mine is rampaging all over the garden; doing more mischief than I can set right in a week; and Bony is gone, the land knows where; chasing a cat somewhere, I s'pose; that creature beats all

for being busy about something that needn't be done!"

"I've seen cows," said Winter, assuming a reflective tone, "and I don't feel sure but I might get hold of yours if I wasn't so faint for want of breakfast, and dinner, and supper, that I don't feel equal to a snail, let alone a respectable cow."

One thing Winter's vagabond life had effectually taught him. I am not sure he could have helped being impudent in tone and manner, if he had tried, and it was long since he had heartily tried.

"Hungry, are you?" the woman said, surveying him; "of course; I never saw a boy who wasn't; and boys of your sort never amount to enough to be decently fed. Well, if you catch my cow, and do it without making her do more mischief than she has already, I'll see to your supper. As for breakfast, you can look out for it somewhere else."

Just so much resolution there was in Winter's heart:

"I'll catch the cow and milk her, and bring in the milk, and if she gives me a decent supper I'll hang around here all night and be on hand in the morning and make myself necessary."

He gave a low chuckle as he recalled the good advice given him that morning from the fence-post, then frowned and sighed. Some influence had gotten hold of the boy which he did not understand.

The cow was easily reduced to order ; the milk-pail stood on the stool, waiting, and Winter, going readily back to the accomplishments of his earlier boyhood, soon foamed the pail to the brim and brought it triumphantly towards the house, just as the mistress thereof, who had been called in another direction, was hurrying out to see the result of her experiment. Alas for Winter and his half-formed resolves ! Startled by her sudden rush from the outer door, he sprang backward to save his milk from her onset, tripped against a treacherous root that had been overlooked, and sprawled headlong at her feet, literally soaking himself the while in the foamy milk, which streamed into each jacket pocket, into his ears, his eyes, everywhere, indeed, but down his throat. Then did the wrath of the trim-looking woman burst forth !

“Why, in the name of common sense, did you have to meddle with the milk ? Couldn’t you do what you were told, without getting your dirty jacket into my milk-pail, and then spilling the whole thing over you, in that fashion ? You need mopping off in something besides milk ; a pail of hot suds and a broom would be a good deal better. I might have known a *boy* couldn’t do anything but mischief. Who told you to milk ? ”

Under this tirade Winter arose, his face very red, milk in his hair, and in his eyes, and streaming from his jacket. All the impudent swagger

with which he had first spoken was gone. It was a fashion which he had adopted since he quite lost self-respect, and when he was excited or embarrassed it deserted him. He answered with almost the dignity he had been wont to give to Mrs. Josiah Griggs :

“I’m very sorry about the milk ; I’m used to milking, and I meant to help you and earn my supper. That old root ought to be dug up ; it will do worse mischief than this, some day. But it can’t be helped now, and there’s no use crying for spilt milk.” Already he had dropped back into the impudent tone. The curious mixture in words and manner seemed to puzzle his listener.

“Well,” she said, after giving him a prolonged stare, “you are like the rest of them — only more so. Whatever folks do with *boys* ! — Give me your jacket, and I’ll dry it for you at the kitchen-stove, and give you your supper, since I promised, though you’ve spilled milk enough to pay for a dozen suppers ; and then do you *tramp*, as fast as your feet can carry you ; and when I apply to such a looking baggage as you for help again, I hope I may be” —

She was remarkable for not finishing her sentences. Winter opened his lips in a strong desire to tell her to keep her suppers, and he did not thank her for offering to dry his jacket ; but he was very hungry, and was used, by this time, to all sorts of treatment, and a jacket slippery with milk is a

most uncomfortable thing. So at last he closed his lips over the saucy words which were struggling to come forth, drew off his jacket, and handed it to the woman without speaking. She took it between her thumb and finger, held it at arm's length, and regarded it with a disgusted and suspicious air all the way to the kitchen.

"Sit down *there!*" she said, turning back as she reached the side door, and pointing to the milking-stool. "Don't come any nearer to the house, for pity's sake."

Then she vanished.

The boy sat down, his face more bitterly gloomy than ever. "My little scheme of making myself necessary is all up. I've got to make myself scarce, instead. Well, I don't care; that is just how I knew it would be."

And that poor, foolish boy immediately went into a fierce state of feeling toward somebody or something, he hardly knew what. "Fate," he always named it in his thoughts. Hadn't he half meant to try? Hadn't he made a movement toward trying? And look what a damp and slippery scrape it had brought him into!

"I sha'n't try again," he muttered. And this seemed to him to be a sort of revenge, though who, beside himself, was injured by this line of action he did not know.

Meantime, Miss Hester Putnam had reached her neat kitchen, where the fire burned briskly

and the kettle sang softly, and everything shone as though freshly polished that day. The ragged and dripping jacket was certainly a contrast. She held it over the square of oilcloth in front of the sink, and regarded it doubtfully.

"Mercy on me! What shall I do with the thing? It is nothing but one great *rag*, anyway. The idea of *my* having to touch it! It ought to be washed out. The milk will sour on it and then it will smell worse than it does now. But *I can't* wash it. I would much rather put it in the fire; that is just what ought to be done with it. But I suppose it is better than nothing. There is that one which Don left, hanging in the attic, about the size . . . this. But, dear me, this fellow isn't the sort of boy to wear Don's cast-off jackets! Still, if I've got to wash it, why, then — I wonder what the pockets are stuffed with? There's a roaring fire, and I could poke the whole mess into the blaze, and open all the dampers, and have it over with — only he might have something in the pockets. I wonder if I ought to look? O, dear me, what a mess that cow has got me into! And Bony, I declare for it, *he* shall not have his supper, anyhow! Well, if I must, I must."

Whereupon, first taking the precaution to spread a good-sized newspaper on the floor, she turned the offending garment upside down and shook it *vigorously*, then stood back and looked at the little heap on the floor in undisguised dismay.

CHAPTER VII.

UNSEEN CONNECTIONS.

A WORTHLESS heap it was ; strings, of course ; and the pitiful remains of a jackknife, and a little milk-soaked book about two inches square. This book Miss Putnam picked out from the rest with the tips of her fingers and a distrustful air. Tramps always carried with them disreputable literature ; dime novels, the "weekly story paper" and matters of that sort ; she had heard this, and firmly believed it ; but was it possible that Satan manipulated such tiny volumes as these ? She held the book off at arm's length, as she now had to do, when her handsome gold-rimmed spectacles were not in service, and read the first lines on which her eyes alighted. "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

"For pity's sake !" ejaculated Miss Putnam, in her most astonished tone, and then was silent. What a book for a ragged tramp like that to be carrying around ! Could it be possible that he

ever read in it? He did not look to her as though reading was one of his accomplishments.

Not thinking about the words, she turned the leaves to discover the extent of damage done by the milk, and came upon this verse, "He that honoreth Him hath mercy on the poor."

"For pity's sake!" said Miss Putnam again. It seemed to her very strange that those two texts should confront her just now. "Blessed are they that do His commandments." Wasn't she one of those who tried in a fitful sort of way to "do" them? She knew she was not in any sense remarkable for her Christian zeal; in fact, she had a dim suspicion that she was not remarkable for anything but neatness; upon this she had always prided herself; was not "cleanliness next to godliness?" That sentence sounded as though it ought to be in the Bible; she was not quite sure but it was; nobody but Miss Putnam herself knew what a trial it was to her to have the nicely-scoured boards in front of her steps flooded with milk, as they were at this moment. The thought of them hastened her movements; she took time to lay the little book on a pine chip on the corner of the kitchen shelf to dry; then she unceremoniously burned the heap of string and bits of paper.

As she tossed the worthless jackknife to the boy on the milking-stool, she looked closely at him and said to herself: "'He that honoreth *Him* hath mercy on the poor.' He's poor enough, and no

mistake. I dare say that little book was given to him by his mother, and maybe she's gone. Have you got a mother, boy?"

She raised her voice to ask the question. Winter shook his head. He was not in the mood for words; something like the bitterness of a vague disappointment was upon him; he had attempted to make himself "necessary," and the spilled milk was the result.

"Poor wretch!" said Miss Putnam, as she closed the kitchen door, "he shall have a decent supper, anyway; and I won't wash the horrid old jacket; I'll give him Don's."

This settled, she took the tongs, and with them lifted the jacket into an empty coal-hod that was in the outer kitchen waiting for ashes.

Half an hour later, and Winter Kelland's supper was ready. Somebody ought to write that supper's history. It was evolved by degrees from Miss Putnam's cupboard and conscience. At first it had been three generous slices of brown bread and a bowl of milk. Miss Putnam had surveyed the bright pan of creamy milk with a grim air for a few minutes, silver spoon and little cream pitcher in hand; then she had set aside the pitcher, and, dashing in the spoon, had stirred the cream mercilessly, until skimming was out of the question. From this pan she had filled Winter's bowl. A plate of cold potatoes seemed to call her as she passed. She paused and looked at him.

"Boys like warmed-up potatoes," she said, "and there are more there than I need for breakfast ; he might as well have them as the chickens. I'll clap in a few and let them warm themselves."

But they warmed themselves with the help of a fair quantity of sweet beef drippings, and the odor which wandered through the kitchen and out to the milking-stool was savory enough for a less hungry boy than the tramp who sat there. By the great haunch of cold beef ready for to-morrow's use, Miss Putnam paused for some time.

"It's ridiculous!" she said at last ; "perfectly ridiculous ! but he looks as hungry as a wolf ; and I don't know who has a right to find fault with what I choose to do."

The last words spoken almost defiantly, and while the great pinky slices were slipping from under the sharp meat-knife. When it came to the soft, black gingerbread which lay in flaky sheets on the cake tins, Miss Putnam smiled grimly. It did seem as though she was making a goose of herself, she owned that ; but here was so much more than she needed, or could use before it dried ; she hated dried gingerbread ; and all boys had a sweet tooth, even if they were tramps ; and this boy, whoever he were, was to wear Don's jacket. Suppose Don was there to take supper with her, what gingerbreads without number would she bring forward for him ! The jacket should have one more good supper.

“ Besides,” said Miss Putnam aloud, and stopped. If she had finished the sentence it would have been, “ He that honoreth *Him* hath mercy on the poor.” To be sure there was no connection between “ mercy ” and gingerbread, nor yet cheese, of which she cut a large slice, refusing to argue about the matter ; nevertheless, that supper was inextricably mixed in Miss Putnam’s mind with those two verses from the little book.

Now I want you to think for a moment of Winter Kelland’s experiences heretofore. Memory dated back to the pauper table of a county poor-house. Perhaps you do not know just how meals are served in those institutions. Winter did, but your general knowledge of life will tell you that bowls of milk with the cream stirred in, and pinky slices of carefully-cooked meat, and potatoes warmed to just the shade of delicate brown which you know, without being told, was the point to which Miss Putnam brought hers, to say nothing of fresh gingerbread and new cheese, are, to put it mildly, rare combinations in a county poor-house. When for Winter the scene shifted, it settled in Mrs. Josiah Griggs’ kitchen ; you have had a glimpse of the dreariness which reigned there, though I know you do not fully appreciate it. Without being in any sense a bad woman, Mrs. Griggs was one of the sort who had few refinements of feeling to burden her own life, and none whatever to spare on chore-boys. She had

one cracked and very ill-smelling plate ; she always served Winter's meals on it ; not in ugliness, but in sheer stupidity as to a *boy's* possibly caring about any such thing ; and because of a general idea that of course the cracked plate was a suitable dish for a boy. Many other things went by chance ; of course, she liked her potatoes hot, but why should a great strong boy care ? It was with these and kindred views upon her that she always prepared his meals, serving them on the corner of the kitchen table, in close proximity to the garbage pail on one side, where scraps were gathering for the pigs, and flanked on the other by the great dishpan in which she had already "washed up" the greasiest of the cooking dishes.

But when that scene changed ! O, dear ! Her kitchen and the food she served would often have been the personification of comfort to Winter, compared with the places in which he had been fed, and the things he had eaten and the things he had gone without.

Possibly, now, you can have some conception of the effect which that supper had upon him, which was spread on shining white dishes on the whitest of Miss Putnam's several kitchen tables ; spread neatly, because Miss Putnam did not know how to spread a meal otherwise ; a pat of delicious butter and another slice of sweet brown bread were added at the last moment, because—well, because Miss Putnam had set out to "honor Him."

Winter still occupied the milking-stool, his worst look spreading over his face.

“A good beginning, this!” he said to himself; “looks fatherly, I must say. I wonder what my friend, the grandfather, would say to it; the first time in months that I’ve made an honest try, and I must bring up in a great wet sprawl on her clean doorstep. I was a fool for milking her cow; she would have given me the crusts left from her supper — if she ever gets it eaten — without that, and I’d have been off by this time looking up a sleeping-place. There’s nothing for me but tramping, and I might as well settle down to it.”

Just at that moment was he called to supper.

Half an hour later he stood under the clear October sky, in the starlight, and pulled off the ragged, rimless hat he wore and looked up at the stars, and swallowed hard, and winked, and would not have owned, even to the stars, that his eyelids were wet and that something seemed to be choking him. It wasn’t the extreme excellency of the food, nor the exquisite neatness of the surroundings, nor the silver spoon with which he had eaten the creamy milk, actually the first silver spoon Winter had ever held in his hand! It was none of these things in themselves which had so touched the boy; in fact, he could not have told you what it was. It was all confused in his mind with that talk of the morning; stray words of which persistently clung to him, repeated themselves to his

consciousness ; such as, "Manage the roast beef and plum pudding business for yourself," or, "Take your place in the world like folks." As he spread the golden butter over the golden bread, and cut a generous mouthful from the tender beef, there had come over Winter such a sense of what it would be to live in such a home as this, to sit at such a table, to actually belong to all this neatness and sweetness, as had seemed to almost prevent his swallowing ; though he wanted every crumb of the wonderful supper.

"For pity's sake !" Miss Putnam had said when she found that he had actually accomplished the eating of every morsel she had given him. Yet there was satisfaction in her voice as she used her favorite exclamation. Her next words were :

"I do hope the poor wretch had enough. He looks dreadfully young for such a life ; only supposing for a moment that it was Don !"

With this dire thought, she rushed to the door :

"You just wait a minute ; I'm going to get you an old jacket that belongs to my nephew, in place of that rag you had on. It won't hold together to be washed ; you don't mind my putting it in the fire, do you."

"No, ma'am," said Winter, and added, with a queer little tremble in his voice, "I thank you very much for my supper ; I never had such a supper before in my life."

"I'm sure you're welcome," said Miss Putnam ;

then she shut and locked the door, and flew up the attic stairs.

There was the jacket, hanging just where she put it with her own hands after washing and mending it, ready to put into the next home mission box which was packed in their society. "It is neat and clean and whole," had Miss Putnam said when she hung it there, "and if the home mission folks are half so badly off as the papers make out, they'll be glad to get it, if it is partly worn. What my own nephew would wear if he hadn't outgrown it, I guess will do for a home mission boy, if he is a minister's son."

Now, as it came down from the hook, it received this bit of address :

"If *he* isn't a home missionary, I'm sure I don't know who is. I'm at home, anyhow, if he isn't. I wonder where his home is, and what he has gone away from it for. I didn't know they ever started out to make tramps of themselves so dreadful young; there can't be two years between him and Don. And his mother is dead. Poor thing! I wonder how she would feel if she could see him now? Maybe she kept him looking nice and trim when she was here. He isn't a bad-looking fellow, I believe, if he would comb his hair and wash himself; but maybe he hasn't had a chance to do any such thing. Maybe he hasn't even a comb. For pity's sake? There! what's the use in talking? There is no end to such things. Suppose one does

try to have 'mercy on the poor,' where will one bring up, I should like to know?"

Meantime, Winter was out under the stars, waiting for the jacket. "I'd work for some second-hand clothes," had his fence-post acquaintance of the morning said; and Winter had looked in particular at his ragged jacket and smiled his sarcastic smile, and wondered to himself if it *would* drop off gradually bit by bit, and how he should look in his shirt sleeves; and had had not a shadow of hope of getting a better one in its place; and now one was coming to him. Coming, too, because of that pail of milk over which he had groaned and gloomed. How fierce he had been over his fate; and it was proving to be the first bit of luck which had reached him for many a day. You will observe that he knew nothing about the little book, and the part which it had played in this matter, and yet he was impressed, almost awed, by a curious realization of the fact that out of the thing which he called evil had come his bit of good. As to the other good, the wonderful supper which had been spread for him, he could not understand that at all. He puzzled over it. Could she be in the habit of feeding all tramps in that way? No, assuredly she was not. Miss Putnam's neighbors could have told him that the utmost she ever did for tramps was to give them a neat square of bread in a neat paper bag, and shut and lock the kitchen door after them as quickly as possible. Miss Put-

nam was much surprised at her own line of action this evening, and only half recognized the power of the little book in the matter. She came down now, jacket in hand, and called him to try if it fitted.

"If it had been made for you, it couldn't have done better," she said, in grim satisfaction. "Well, you're welcome to it; as good a boy as ever lived wore it; I wish I could think that you wouldn't disgrace it. Here are the traps you had in your pocket."

Miss Putnam stretched her conscience to say this. It wasn't "traps"; at the utmost it could only have been called a "trap;" that tiny book which she had wrapped in a bit of paper, because she could not bring herself to hand it boldly forth to him and let him know that she knew what it was. The shamefacedness of some otherwise outspoken people, in regard to everything which savors of a religious nature, can only be understood by those shamefaced people themselves who have dodged an issue many a time rather than speak a word in honor of the Master whom they love.

"Where are you going to sleep to-night?"

"Anywhere, ma'am;" he looked up at her as he spoke, with a grateful smile still lingering on his face. "I'm used to sleeping wherever it happens; but I'm not used to such a jacket as this. I thank you, ma'am. Good-by!"

He had not the slightest desire to say a saucy word. The rather long walk to the front gate had been taken, the unusual fastening had been labored with and overcome, the gate opened and clicked to again. before Miss Putnam opened her door and called .

“Look here ; I s’pose you could sleep in the carriage-house, if you wanted to .”

CHAPTER VIII

“WILL YOU?”

THEY stood together in the shadow of one of the tallest trees — Miss Mildred Powers and little Vine Wilmeth.

“There!” the child said, with a sigh of satisfaction, looking up into the sun-lighted branches, “I’ve brought you to the very prettiest spot there is in all the grove, I think. Here is just where we stood that day; I know it by the letters in the tree. Can you read the letters? And we planned what we would do when I was twenty-two years old. Wasn’t it funny?”

“It was rather interesting, I think. Where is that friend now?”

The sigh was a trifle more marked this time, and had no satisfaction in it.

“He went away,” she said simply, “and I have never heard a word about him. I don’t know what he is doing, but I’m sure he is a good and smart boy wherever he is. Winter Kelland could not be anything but good; and he was very smart.”

O Winter, Winter! sitting dolefully at this

moment on the milking-block in Miss Putnam's back yard! if you could hear the quiet assurance of tone with which your faithful old friend says these words, wouldn't your conscience feel a sting?

"He must be a very pleasant friend," said Mildred sympathetically. "When one is good and smart, there is little else to be desired."

"He isn't my friend now," said truthful Vine; "that is, I'm his friend, you know, and always shall be; but he doesn't remember me."

"Why are you so sure of that?" and a smile played over the lady's face.

"Why, because I never heard a word from him, you see, and it is three years since he went away. Three years ago to-day we came out here to the tree and he made the letters."

"Well—but what sort of reasoning is that? He has never heard a word from you, either, has he? Yet you say you are his friend, and always shall be. Why can he not say the same of you?"

"I think it is very different." There was not the slightest hesitancy in Vine's manner; her head was dropped a little to one side in contemplative mood, and there was a quiet sadness in her tone which was amusing to her companion, and also a trifle touching.

"You see, he knows just where I am; I have stayed in the same place—well, we moved out here, of course; but then, we go to the same post-office. And he could write beautifully, Miss Pow-

ers; he liked to write. If he remembered me, and — and *wanted* to remember me, he could have written a letter just as easy! But I don't know in the least where he is, and so, of course, I could not write to him. Besides, it is different with him. He goes to a great splendid school, I suppose, and sees ever so many people, and reads books, and is busy all day, and has a great many friends, and of course he wouldn't remember one little bit of a girl.”

Miss Powers had much ado not to laugh.

“I don't understand why you are so sure of all this,” she said; but her tone expressed hearty sympathy. “Why may he not be very poor and friendless, and be having a hard struggle?”

“O, I hope not! I do hope Win is doing beautifully. He ought to, Miss Powers; he had a hard enough time when he was a little boy. And I think he is. I'm most sure Win would have a great many friends as soon as he got where nice people were; he was so kind and unselfish, and so true in every way.”

“What about the people with whom he lived when he was here — weren't they nice?”

Vine made an expressive gesture with eyes and shoulders.

“Nice! They were just horrid! I beg your pardon, Miss Powers; I know you don't like such words; but if you knew Mr. and Mrs. Griggs, I am sure you wouldn't wonder that Winter — went

away from them just as soon as he could. They are not people to like at all. Mrs. Griggs sometimes sits before me in church, and then I can't sing a bit. I keep thinking of Win and the way she treated him and talked about him, and something comes into my throat just like a big lump, and all the sing goes away."

Miss Powers regarded the earnest little speaker with an almost regretful air of sympathy. She understood her perfectly; but what an intense little thing she was! Would not life have a hard chapter in it for her if she did not centre herself on some Rock too strong to feel the blasts of circumstances? This thought recalled her again to the words she had meant to speak this morning to her little friend.

"Vine, I am going away to-day, you know. We are having our last walk together. Am I to have a sweet memory to carry away with me?"

Vine was silent, and a deep flush of color stole into her cheeks.

"I am very anxious about it, Vine. It seems to me you understand the way so well; you are such a womanly little girl, and have thought so carefully about all these things; your responsibility is greater than that of many girls of your age. I wish I knew, Vine dear, why it is you hesitate about this. It would seem to me to be the most natural thing for you to settle the thing at once. I thought you would be one who would give your

whole warm heart to the Lord Jesus as soon as you realized that he was waiting for you. I don't understand the delay, Vinie."

The flush deepened on Vine's cheek ; she looked very grave, but seemed to have great difficulty in forming her thought into words.

"I don't know how to answer you, Miss Powers," she said at last. "I do want to please you, and to do what is right ; but I am afraid I don't feel as you would like to have me. I want to love the Saviour, and to please him ; but — if I could do it without ever joining the Church, I should like it so much better."

"Why, Vine, what a strange idea ! In all my wonderings as to what was keeping my little scholar back, I have never thought of so strange a reason as this. Who has said anything to you, dear, about joining a church ?"

"Nobody, ma'am ; but then they all join churches, you know, as soon as they think they are Christians. Only last spring that disagreeable Mrs. Griggs joined the church ; I was there the Sunday they received her, and it seemed to me she never looked more hateful. She spoke to me as she came down the aisle. I forgot when I told you no one had said anything about it. She did. 'It seems to me, Elviny, you are old enough to be doing your dooty too.' That was what she said. Nobody calls me Elvina except mother, when she isn't quite pleased with me ; and she doesn't say 'Elviny.' And Mrs. Griggs has

no right to be talking to me about my 'dooty.' I do it better than she does hers, I guess. O, Miss Powers! you think I am wicked, but I can't help it; you don't know how I dislike that woman."

And this was their gentle little Vine, with her fair, sweet face and her pure, trustful eyes. It was Miss Powers' turn to sigh; what a strong hold Satan had gotten on this little girl, through some early friendship and memory. It was difficult to know just what to say, but some reply must be made.

"Do I understand you, Vine," she said at last, "that you are unwilling to serve the Lord because this woman you do not like is trying to do so?"

"O, no, *ma'am*," said Vine, shocked at this plain putting of her naughty thoughts; "I did not mean any such thing, I am sure; but I don't understand about things very well. If Mrs. Griggs is a Christian since she joined the church, I don't think it has improved her a bit. It was only last week I heard her say something that she had no right to say; something which I most *know* isn't true. I don't like her one bit, and I can't. If I thought I had to belong to the same church that she did, I don't know what I should do. I was so sorry when they came out here that I cried all day about it; and as for being in her class in Sunday-school, I never will! I should run away first!"

Gentle, indeed! A real little pent-up volcano was this. Cheeks were blazing, and her eyes shone like stars. Miss Powers only half understood the

situation ; that the little girl's fierce dislike to Mrs. Griggs was connected in some way with her early friend to whom she had been so steadily true, was evident ; and, putting several chance words together, Miss Powers began to suspect that the boy in question had taken very unceremonious leave of his friends in this region ; she was inclined to think Vine's estimate of him was much too high, and that in all probability her judgment of Mrs. Griggs was correspondingly overdrawn, but none of these thoughts would be helpful to Vine just now.

“We are getting away from the subject about which I wanted to talk with you,” she said, speaking in a low, grave tone ; “dear Vine, the last thing I wish to urge upon you is the uniting with any church. You are not in the least ready to do anything of the kind.”

“That is just what I am trying to say,” burst forth Vine ; “people join churches and they aren't a bit better ; and folks look at them and think they ought to be, and are going to be, and they aren't, and then folks are disappointed, and they do harm, and I don't want to do it.”

The tears were starting now ; and a little light was thrown upon the scene. Miss Powers began to understand that this was not all passion. Vine had been watching Mrs. Griggs, had been expecting improvement because she had united herself with the church ; had not seen the improvement — had jumped at the conclusion that there was none ;

had grown afraid that if she were persuaded at any time to take this step, the result would be the same with her.

What was the wise way in which to answer the impetuous child-woman?

“Vine,” Miss Powers said, after a moment of quiet, speaking very low, “won’t you try to get your thoughts entirely away from any church, and from any other persons than yourself and the Lord Jesus Christ? Let us talk about you two; he has asked you to let him come into your heart and live there, helping you each hour to think the thought, speak the word, do the act, which in your judgment enlightened by him, would be the nearest right. What he wants of you is the decision to take him as your friend and follow his directions whether they are hard or easy. What I am asking you is whether you will accept him and agree to follow his lead.”

There was so long a silence that Miss Powers almost thought her intense little friend did not mean to answer. At last she spoke low, her voice tremulous with feeling:

“Miss Powers, what if He should want me to go into that woman’s class she is getting up?”

Miss Powers was startled and perplexed. How was she to lead this fierce little heart?

“My dear,” she said, trying to calm her by the very gentleness of her voice, “you are not doing what I asked; I did not want you to put any woman between

your heart and the invitation of Jesus ; but since you put the question, I must answer you. It will not do for you to put a 'what if' between his invitation and your answer ; that is the mistake which grown people are constantly making, only they make the issues larger than yours. The heart must understand that whatever the Lord directs it *intends* to do, or there is no opening of the door for him. He will not come into a divided heart ; a heart which says 'in some things I will obey you ; but in this, and this, and this, I must have my own way.' You are a thoughtful and sensible little girl, Vine ; you would not expect even a human friend who had the right to direct you, to accept such a position as that, would you ? How much less the Lord ? In point of fact, it is not often that he calls upon people to make the sacrifice which Satan tries to push into their minds as a fearful one ; but whether he does or not is not the question now. Having allowed a 'what if' to come into your heart, Vine, you must get rid of it, by the determination to do *whatever* he says, or you really cannot belong to him, however much you may wish it. I wonder if you understand me, Vine ; I am talking in an older fashion than would do for most people of your age, because you seem so womanly in your thoughts."

The question was asked half of herself ; she was a good deal puzzled with Vine : certainly she was not prepared for the passionate outburst which followed. Vine suddenly crouched down in the

shadow of one of the great trees, put her two brown hands over her face and burst into a perfect torrent of tears and sobs ; rocking her little frame back and forth as though a storm had gotten hold of her which she was powerless to withstand.

"I know it, I know it," she wailed out ; "I can't be good ! I knew I couldn't. I have tried, and I have prayed, and I can't be willing to go in her class, or have her talk to me, or look at me. She was *so* hateful ; you don't know. I never had but just one friend, my Win ; he was good, *so good* to me, and he was good to everybody ; and she was mean and hateful, and said wicked things, and does now, and I *can't* like her ; if I try and try, I like her less every day ; I almost hate her."

"Vine," Miss Powers' hand laid on the hot little forehead felt like a cool lily pad, "did you ever tell the Lord Jesus about this?"

Vine ceased her violent weeping and sat still.

"Tell Him !" she murmured at last, in a tone which was almost awe-stricken.

"Yes, did you ever tell Him all about it as you are telling me ? Of course He knows, yet his direction is that for our own sakes we tell Him the story. Of course you can not help these bitter feelings ; do you suppose He expects you to do so ? If you could make your heart right yourself, where would be the need of his help ? There is not a right thought about this woman which you can make yourself feel ; you can not *make* yourself want to

speak to her or think of her ; no one knows this better than the Lord ; yet his plan is, that if you really want his help, you are to tell him the story. I do not suppose you even care to forgive the woman ; you would rather not forgive her ; you cannot make yourself *want* to do anything else ; but, knowing that you ought to feel differently, there is just one thing you can do, it is your part, you can give that heart which is full of hard feelings and self-will and bitterness, into the Lord's hands, and tell him you want it to be made a fit place for him. Vine, will you give it to him ? "

"But, Miss Powers, if I should do that, of course it would be the same as saying I was ready to join the church, and was willing to—"

Miss Powers interrupted her.

“No, Vine, I am not asking you to make any ‘ifs,’ or join any church, or be willing to go, or to do; the question is simply this: Will you open the door for Jesus to come in, by telling him that your heart is all wrong, and you want it made right? Just as you would tell me, if I had assured you that I was both able and willing to do *all* the rest for you. Will you, Vinie?”

CHAPTER IX.

"I WILL."

THERE was silence under the great trees for a little time. Vine shed no more tears, but she was very still, and kept her face carefully covered with both hands. Miss Powers waited and watched her furtively, and prayed softly. She could but feel that the present was a crisis in the little girl's life. She had spoken only a half truth when she had told Vine that her responsibility was greater than many of her age. Miss Powers had never before known so womanly a child. She had been a curious study to the young student of human nature during the weeks she had spent at the cottage: this child, so wise in word and manner; so thoughtful for others; so developed in her tastes; so intensely childish in her whims; so full of pretty contradictions—a union of baby and woman which was new and interesting. Vine had been a member of her Sabbath-school class during the months just passed, and had bestowed on her the intense, almost passionate, love of a peculiar type of childhood, and had studied her lesson

and questioned about them with a keenness which belonged to mature years. Why this little girl, so well taught, so conscientious, so sensitive, so thoughtful, had not, before this, given her young, warm love to the Saviour of the world, was a question which had puzzled and troubled Miss Powers. She began now to understand it. Little Vine, as everybody called her, was intense in more directions than her loves.

She had admitted into her heart for one woman a feeling which was nearly akin to hatred, and had fostered the feeling until it had taken deep root — had, in a certain sense, gotten possession of her ; and, young as she was, she was passing through the struggle known to some older and fiercer natures — the struggle involved in the solemn sentence, "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Heavenly Father forgive you." Vine had believed for some time that it was quite impossible for her to forgive Mrs. Griggs, and, because she was well taught and had grasped the spiritual meaning of many Bible verses, as some of those who are older, fail to do, she had felt that an impassable barrier lay between her and the loving Lord to whom she had been so often invited. She could not forgive and love Mrs. Griggs, and the Lord would not forgive her until she did ; therefore she could not profess to belong to him. This had been the child's sorrowful reasoning. Those last words of her teacher had opened a new cur-

rent of thought. It was true that she had not told the Lord Jesus of her trouble, just as she had told Miss Powers.

She had cried over it, and said to her mother that there was no use in trying, she could never "feel right" toward Mrs. Griggs; and as for ever belonging to her class in Sunday-school, she would sooner jump into the lake and drown herself, but when it came to the matter of prayer, she had been entirely silent about it, only praying in a general way that she might be forgiven for all the wrong things she had done or thought, and avoiding the Lord's Prayer, with a vague notion that if she did not take those solemn words on her lips, she would not be to blame for the thoughts which contradicted their petitions. It came to her like an entirely new idea that she could go to Jesus as to a human friend and confess to him that she was not equal to this thing which he asked of her, and must be helped in some way not understood by her, if she was ever to have such a feeling as the Bible demanded.

Miss Powers waited, looking anxiously once and again at her watch. She must go on the eleven o'clock boat; the time was drawing near, yet she could not bear to leave this little struggling soul that she knew ought to reach a decision. It was Satan's hour, possibly his last opportunity with her; yet what if she should allow him to come off victor!

"Miss Powers," said Vine at last, dropping her hands and revealing a pale little face, on which a look of quiet resolve had already appeared, "I don't think I have ever quite understood it before; I thought I must do it before I could belong to Jesus. Before I could say I would serve him, you know, I thought I must forgive that woman and begin to — to like her. Miss Powers, the Bible says, 'Love your enemies,' and I thought when I had done that, then I could give myself to Jesus; but I couldn't do it. I tried and *tried*, and the more I tried, the worse it grew. Both Sundays when I thought I would feel more — more right, she said some hateful things which made me all hot inside, and I was worse than ever. But I can tell Jesus about it, and ask him to do it for me in some way; I can't understand how. But, if I understood you, you mean I could just say to him that I want to serve him, and to feel in just the way he would have me, but that I can't do it — and he would accept that?"

Her voice was growing tremulous and doubtful; she had not yet, by any means, taken in the fullness of the salvation waiting for her. Miss Powers made haste to answer:

"You understood me perfectly, Vine. I meant just that. So far from expecting us to wait until we 'feel right,' the Lord Jesus knows that it is quite impossible for us to put these feelings into our own hearts. Don't you remember a line of

the old hymn that we sang one evening on the lake?

All the fitness he requireth
Is to feel your need of Him.

If you need him to put right thoughts into your heart, and mean to follow his directions so far as you can, you need not wait another minute to have your name set down among those who belong to him in everlasting covenant."

"*So far as I can,*" Vine repeated doubtfully.

"Yes; your trouble has been that you wanted to obey his directions so far as you *couldn't*; He does not require of us things which we can not do. Let me see if I can illustrate what I mean. Vine, do you believe you could walk across the lake to the other side?"

"Of course not, Miss Powers."

"But suppose it were possible that you could hear a voice which you knew to belong to the Lord Jesus, saying to you, 'Vine, I want you to go down this moment to the lake and step into the water, and walk over to the other shore,' do you believe you could do it then?"

"Miss Powers, I can't make it seem possible that I could, even then; and I know I ought; and I know God can not love me unless I trust him."

"No, it is just there where you mistake God; he does not wait for perfect faith on the part of his children; if he did, Vine, you and I would be lost. Let me ask you, do you believe at that com

mand you could go down to the lake and step your feet into the water, and leave the rest with him? If you were drowned, you would have obeyed him?"

"Why, yes, Miss Powers, of course I could do that."

"Vine, dear, are you willing, when you hear his voice speaking plainly, to try to obey the command, to take the step which you know you could, and leave with Him the part which you know you could not do?"

Then again there was silence and intense thinking. Vine did not cover her face again, but looked straight before her in an unchildlike way which almost frightened her teacher. Surely, the two unseen powers which war for souls were in conflict here this morning, and the small human will of the child must decide which should conquer.

At last Vine spoke :

"Miss Powers, I *can* do that ; I haven't understood it ever before ; I don't think it is easy ; even that part, but I can do it, and I WILL."

The voice was in capitals ; not loud, but intense. The boat at the wharf sent out a warning whistle. Miss Powers arose, bent over her little friend and kissed her.

"Thank you, Vine," she said, "and God bless and keep you. I know you belong to him now forever. Good-by!"

It was a very pale and unusually thoughtful lit-

tle girl who went about the neat kitchen of the Wilmeths a half hour later, helping to get the simple dinner ready. Mrs. Wilmeth watched her somewhat doubtfully and in silence. She only half understood this sensitive little Vine of hers at any time; she knew now that the teacher of a few months had just been bidden good-by, and she could plainly see traces of tears. She had expected a passionate outburst as soon as Vine reached home; instead, there had been a pathetic kind of resignation which went to the mother's heart. How her little girl could be so weighted down with sorrow over the departure of one who three months before was unknown, was a mystery to the mother; but she accepted it, along with other mysteries about Vine, as a fact, and was prepared to be sympathetic. It was bewildering, however, to have a sort of sorrow which she could not touch.

"She has gone, I suppose," Mrs. Wilmeth had said, as Vine came in; and Vine had struggled with her great pain and said a low "Yes'm," and then "Please, mother, don't talk about it now." And the mother, troubled with the pale face and in doubt what to say, had been silent.

Some changes had come to the Wilmeth family since old Brindle died; they had moved from the dreary, little, old house to a very new house on the grounds which Vine and her old friend Win had visited on that memorable day when they

took their last walk together. The pleasant-voiced young builder had not secured the job, for the reason that Mr. Wilmeth was himself a carpenter, and had builded for himself at odd times when, as he expressed it, he could get nothing of more consequence to do. One consequence was, that the house was still unfinished, and was as simple and unpretentious an affair as even those new grounds could afford. Yet to Vine it was paradise compared with the dreary little house which had been finished so long before she came to it, that the process of decay was well on its way; and everything to the child had seemed so hopelessly old. It was a relief beyond her power of expressing to have all things about her too new to be in order, instead of too old. "It makes all the difference in the world," the child had said with radiant eyes, in talking it over with her mother. And the mother had laughed, and only half understood; and thought for the thousandth time that Vine was "queer."

When they were seated at the dinner table and Mr. Wilmeth had noticed Vine's pale face and the heavy rings under her eyes, and had opened his mouth to speak, and had received his wife's warning shake of the head and closed the mouth again and wondered, and then, good-naturedly, tried to turn her thoughts from whatever sorrowful channel held them, the subject he chose was the Griggs family.

"Josiah Griggs has sold his farm," he began ; "made a good sale, he tells me. The thing was settled to-day, and he won't have to— Why, Vine! What's the matter?"

"Then he will stay here all winter!" gasped the child.

"Why, yes, I suppose so; in fact, he told me he was glad not to have to pull up and move this fall. Why, child, what in the world do you care about it?"

"O, mother, mother!" sobbed Vine, dropping her fork suddenly and rushing to her refuge—head in mother's lap—"I'm afraid I will have to, and I can't."

"Is the child bewitched?" said the worried father.

Mrs. Wilmeth passed a caressing hand over the brown head.

"You won't have to do any such thing. It's ridiculous. The idea of their making you do a thing of that kind that you don't want to! I'd like to see them try it."

"O, mother! it isn't that way. You don't understand. I think—maybe—O, mother! I don't want any dinner; may I go out under the trees?"

"What does all this mean?" asked the bewildered father as soon as Vine had sped away.

"It's just one of her wild little notions; she's the oddest child that ever was born. You know what a feeling she has about the Griggses. Well,

it seems there has been a talk of giving Mrs. Griggs a class in the Sunday-school, and she has somehow got the idea that her class would be the one after Miss Powers left ; and now that you tell her they are to be here all winter, she seems to feel sure of it. It's the most ridiculous notion ! The idea that they can force her against her will to be in that woman's class ! Of course we wouldn't allow anything of the kind, and I've told her so."

Mr. Wilmeth looked very sober, and at last said, with a long-drawn sigh :

"I wish she weren't such an intense little thing. I'm afraid she will find living very hard business."

"I know it. I'm in a tremble for her half the time. She is so kind of fierce in all her feelings ; and it is strange, when she seems to be so quiet. I don't half understand her. I wish somebody or something could get hold of her to hush her down."

If this father and mother had at this time known of the solemn Power which had just taken hold anew of their Vine's life, not only to "hush her down," but to anchor her, so that the blasts of life could not swerve her from her course, they would not have understood it. They had no personal knowledge of Him to whom she had but just given herself.

Neither did they understand her course in the least on the very next day. The ordeal came to

Vine earlier than she had expected, and in a different way.

It was in Sabbath-school, and the superintendent was standing doubtfully before this large class of young girls.

"You know," he said, "that Miss Powers thought the class quite too large ; and now that winter is coming, and we shall have to crowd together closer, it will not be convenient at all. I can find no one who will take charge of so many. They say they can not do you justice, and they can't ; but if you will consent to form two classes, Miss Jenkins will take one and Mrs Griggs the other. Now I look to you for help ; there are twelve of you, and six apiece will make just the right kind of classes. Suppose we let Miss Jenkins keep this seat, and those of you who will take that nice quiet corner over by the window and be Mrs. Griggs' scholars, just volunteer now."

Ominous silence reigned. The girls frowned and looked at one another and kept their lips closed. Mrs. Griggs was evidently not popular among them. Vine kept eyes as well as lips sealed. She had very speaking eyes, but she veiled them under long lashes and looked steadily down at her open Bible.

"Well," said the superintendent, with a long-drawn sigh, "I'm sorry ; I hoped you would help me. I'm sure I don't know what to do."

Then came the surprise. Vine, her cheeks

aglow, her voice distinct and firm, her grave eyes raised to his face :

"Mr. Maxen, I will be one to go into Mrs. Griggs' class."

"Why, Vine Wilmeth!" exclaimed her most intimate acquaintance in the class, "you, of all people in the world. Well, if you will, I will."

"So will I," "and I," "and I," exclaimed a second, and third, and before the relieved superintendent had a chance to speak, the volunteer list was full.

"I am so much obliged to you," Mr. Maxen said, bending low to Vine, and speaking so others could not hear. "You will have a nice class. All the others needed was a leader."

And Mrs. Wilmeth lingering at the church door, wondering whether Vine would need her help in any way, had the astonishment of seeing her lead a file of girls over to the quiet corner where Mrs. Josiah Griggs sat waiting.

CHAPTER X.

GROWING "NECESSARY."

WHOA!" said Winter Kelland. "Stand still, can't you?" and he gave some impatient jerks to the reins which the fat little pony was twitching. The trouble with the pony was, that she thought the engine was making more than his share of noise, and puffed volumes of smoke into her face, which was very disagreeable. It was the "up" train, and Winter was to wait five minutes for the "down" one; so he sat still in the wagon and jerked at the pony, instead of getting out to tie her.

"That waddling pony will get somebody into trouble yet," said a looker-on. "Her mistress always used to tie her across the road behind the store, but this fellow brings her nose right up in front of the engine."

"He knows what he is about," nodded a second lounge. "He has trained the little beast until she will stand pretty near to the cars, on ordinary occasions, and keep still. This train is doing an extra amount of puffing. He ain't hard on the

critter, neither. He's considerable of a boy with horseflesh, I believe. He ought to have a chance on something beside that pony."

None of these comments did Winter hear; he was intent on watching the pony, speaking occasional kindly words to her; controlling his temptation to jerk her again, because he knew enough about horses to be sure that, as a rule, such a process only made matters worse. He had spoken crossly to her at first, under an impulse of disappointment, because she twitched and seemed frightened, despite all his lectures on the subject; but he straightway reflected that horses require infinite patience, and quieted his voice and manner.

He was changed in appearance from the boy who sat on the milking-stool. Older? Yes, nearly two years. But there are more important changes. His gray suit is patched, it is true, and is growing threadbare in some places, and the sleeves will soon be too short for him; but the patching is very neat, and the clothes are free from spots, while the mass of curly brown hair is reduced to comparative order, and face and hands are clean. Altogether a decided change for the better. Miss Putnam looks at him complacently at those times when some chance occurrence brings the vision of his first coming before her, and congratulates herself that she did a real good thing when she gave that boy Don's jacket and let him sleep in the carriage-house. He sleeps in the carriage-

house still, or rather in the chamber over it, which has been built for him. For two years, nearly, he has laid aside the character of a tramp, and has earned the name of "Miss Putnam's boy." In the pretty village, which is really the suburb of a brisk little city, that name means not only decency, but a certain amount of reflected respectability. Miss Putnam commands the respect of all who know her. Winter Kelland has not by any means been adopted; he was not even deliberately hired. Miss Putnam had to be the victim of several quarrels between her prudence and her conscience before the former consented to the boy's sleeping for a few nights in the carriage-house.

"The idea!" said Prudence. "Just as likely as not he will set the building on fire and make off with the whip and things; you never can expect anything decent from tramps."

"But then," said Conscience, "the poor wretch must sleep somewhere; the nights are growing too cold for him to lie around out of doors, like a dog; in fact, you know you wouldn't leave your dog Bony out."

"But you are not responsible for his sleeping," urged Prudence; "and you ought to remember that you are a lonely woman. If you had a man in the house it might be different."

"You hush up!" said Miss Putnam aloud, and stamping her foot. "I guess I'm equal to letting a forlorn rag of a boy sleep in my carriage-house

if I want to, if I *am* a woman. I don't want a man in the house."

In this way temporary peace was declared.

Winter, on his part, resolved to stay a week with the old lady, if she would let him, and split and pile her wood. At the end of a week the wood was piled; so were several other things. The cow-house had been kept in good order, the milking carefully done, without any more spilling, and altogether Miss Putnam grimly told the long-suffering Prudence that he was the most decent-acting tramp she ever saw, by a great deal.

After that the days slipped along without any understanding, until Winter began, with a curious smile puckering the corners of his mouth, to hint to himself that he believed he was getting "necessary." Little by little he had been more decently clothed from Don's cast-off garments, and, at last, he was formally hired for as long as he wanted to stay, "Or until we both get sick of our bargain," was Miss Putnam's way of putting it. Now, after the lapse of two years, she would almost as soon have thought of discharging herself as her "tramp," as she still grimly called him occasionally.

Yet you are not to suppose that she was deeply attached to Winter, or had given him very much attention or thought. She had cared for his clothes and for his comfort in a humane and entirely reasonable way; she had learned to trust his word, and to leave all common matters more

and more in his care. She had told him with an encouraging smile that she believed if he would put his mind to it he could make a real good farmer ; and that maybe he would some day have entire charge of somebody's farm. Boys did sometimes get up in the world. In fact, it was quite common, if you were to believe newspaper stories. She had insisted on his going to church once every Sunday, and had urged him to go to Sunday-school ; but over this the boy had rebelled. She had finished off a neat little room over the carriage-house and let him make himself a rude washstand for his bright tin basin and wooden soap-dish. During the fall of his second year with her, she had asked if he wouldn't like to go to school for three months ; but when he answered with a flush on his brown face, and a half laugh, which seemed to have a touch of bitterness, that he was "too tall for such nonsense," she had been the sort of adviser who had said with a sigh :

"Well, you are pretty big, that's a fact ; I s'pose you would have to be among the primaries ; it's such a pity that you neglected your opportunities for so long."

Winter's face always grew dark over such hints ; he believed now that running away from the Griggs homestead had been his one false step, from which he was never to recover. He could see that if he had stayed and plodded on, and learned what little he could, in the poor school to which he had access

for a few months, chances might have opened to him; but now he must be always an ignorant nobody. Do you think it a strange mood to possess one so young? Remember that at fifteen the boys of to-day are, as a rule, done with arithmetic and grammar, are well on in Latin, and talk learnedly about "problems in geometry." Winter had never seen a Latin grammar, and did not know what a geometry was.

Still as he sits this waning afternoon in the little spring wagon, waiting for the belated down-train, with his arms folded, a little smile of complacency on his face that the pony has conquered her fears and is standing still, though the engine of a freight lying on a side-track continues at intervals to send out unmeaning screeches and disgusting puffs of thick, black smoke, his face does not wear the expression of a thoroughly disappointed boy. The truth is, that for such a boy as he was, it was absolutely necessary, as soon as he discarded his vagrant life and settled down into respectability, to have an ambition of some sort. His earlier dreams had been to be a scholar; part of the fierce disgust over his life with the Griggs family had been because of his meagre opportunities in this direction. Then, having worse than thrown away three years, and taken another year to get back to the level of common decency, he had gloomed and groaned, and well-nigh shipwrecked himself again over the thought that life must, at its best, be a

failure ; then he settled into the decision that he would be a farmer of the very best type. Nothing which could be learned about the soil, by observation and experiment, should escape him. The time should come when he would be recognized as an authority in all these matters ; people should be made to see that their miserable books, which were denied to him, did not contain *all* the knowledge worth having in this world.

To this end he was now bending his energies, with such success that Miss Putnam's little garden was becoming a matter of interest to all her neighbors ; the earliest peas, the crispest radishes, the choicest potatoes, were to be found there ; and continual and successful war was waged against their enemies, the weeds. Miss Putnam looked on complacently, and, from directing, was gradually dropping into the place of one who meekly advised, or asked a question for the sake of information ; and steadily rejoiced that the forlorn boy was growing into so decent and useful a member of society ; and never once imagined that her whole duty in regard to him was not being done, or that he could ever have felt an aspiration above his present condition. Miss Putnam had belonged all her life to the well-to-do part of the world. Her brothers and sisters and nephews and nieces, had been of those who, as a matter of course, spend their early years in good schools ; the boys at the regulation age entering college ; indeed, several of the girls had in these

later years gone to college also ; Miss Putnam had no acquaintance with a boy who was not well up in Latin by the time he was fifteen ; to her mind there were but two types of boys — the one who at sixteen read Virgil as well as she did her Bible ; and the boy who at sixteen belonged to the great outside world to whom it was our duty to be kind when we could as well as not. She had been kind, unprecedentedly kind, to Winter Kelland, and was complacent accordingly. That he had repaid her kindness by becoming a help to her in a hundred ways, was only a decent recompense for the good she had bestowed. To be sure, he had done better than most boys of his stamp ; but so had she done better by him than people often did for tramps.

You have now the boy's status so far as his present home was concerned. As for his social position, he had none whatever. It may, perhaps, seem almost incredible to you that a boy could live for two years in a small place and know so little of the people as this boy did. Yet had you been in the town and met the people, you would have understood it readily enough. It was the suburb of quite a smart Western city ; there was very little business done in the village ; it represented homes ; some of them handsome, nearly all of them neat and well-to-do. The husbands and fathers, almost to a man, went daily to town by early trains, and returned for late dinners with their families. Sons and daughters, to a very large extent, followed this

example, taking largely the trains which best fitted the hours of normal schools, commercial colleges, young ladies' seminaries and the like ; still another class of young people thronged into the city as clerks in stores, millineries, telephone offices and what not. It represented a busy little world, yet the business was almost exclusively carried on out of its world ; and its people came home only for rest and recreation.

To the middle-aged people, recreation meant lounging in their pleasant homes after late dinners, glancing over the newspapers, and striving to keep up some sort of acquaintance with their wives. Among the young people there were endless gatherings ; gay social evenings, informal dances, walks, rides and the like, interspersed with constant trips to the city to attend lectures, concerts, theatres or parties. With all these forms of recreation, Miss Putnam had nothing in common ; she lived to herself. Known by everybody, highly respected, called on for contributions to church festivals, fairs, sociables or whatever was in the air just then ; called on by the busy pastor at stated intervals, she was rarely visited in any other than these ways. Can you not readily see how, in such a place, the boy Winter was as utterly shut off from companionship as though he had been in the depths of the Northern woods ? There were not even any boys employed like himself, with whom he could associate ; most of the people who were

sufficiently wealthy to keep male hired help, by reason of the constant absence of the fathers and brothers, preferred middle-aged men of experience who would be responsible persons in any emergencies which might arise. I do not know that it ever occurred to Winter as a special providence that he was thus stranded in the midst of a busy world ; but I want you to think for a moment what an advantage it was to the boy, in his loneliness, to be so situated that there were no evil companions, homeless and lonely like himself, to get hold of his leisure hours and lead him downward. If he must be let alone of God's dear people, at least it was a blessing that Satan's emissaries did not find him out, or, knowing of him, consider him of enough importance to be sought out and lured into their nets. It happened that the little suburb was strictly temperate, so far as alcohol was concerned ; so no saloon polluted the air ; the victims of that curse — of which there were some — sought the city.

What did the boy do with his evenings ?

Well, for some time that was a problem which depressed him ; not what he did, but what he *should* do with them. They hung heavily on his hands as the days began to grow shorter and lamp-light hours seemed to set in directly after dinner. He could sleep a good deal, and did ; but there were evenings when he felt such a rush of restless life throbbing in his veins, that the warm, neat

kitchen, with nothing to do but whittle, and take care that his chips did not litter the spotless floor, seemed to him little else than a prison, and he would half resolve to start by the next morning's light and tramp again.

But there must have been an inborn love of cleanliness and decency in the boy, for at such moments he would immediately think, first of the sweet-smelling sheets on his bed over the carriage-house, and think next, with a shudder, of the places in which he had slept ; and resolve to endure even the long evenings yet a while.

During this time Miss Putnam sat at rest among her flowers, and her daily papers, and her books, and her knitting ; entirely comfortable ; reading short breezy letters from Don, or writing long, careful ones to him ; thinking always with satisfaction of the boy in the kitchen, whom she began to trust, and who she knew was well fed and comfortably clothed, and occupying a kitchen warm, and neat, and bright. How was she to know that beings of his class ever needed more ?

What would have been the outcome of such a state of things I do not know, nor will you ever know, for this state of things suddenly changed. It is true, the change was apparently so slight that even the central figure in the scene had no conception of what would be the final result ; and the starting-point was determined by a very trivial circumstance.

CHAPTER XI.

ENERGY AND FORCE.

SOMETHING as trivial as a scrap of paper, which came wrapped around a bundle of groceries.

"Wrapping his things in newspaper!" had Miss Putnam said in intense disgust as she unrolled the package and tossed aside the offending scrap. "Faugh! Just like that man's enterprise; and he is always whining that people don't 'patronize him,' but run to the city for everything; no wonder."

The paper had been picked up, a little later, and laid in the wood-box for kindling. On Miss Putnam's premises not even so much as a scrap of paper was allowed to waste itself. That same evening, as Winter, utterly weary of the bit of skillful whittling he was doing, gathered the chips and gave them a contemptuous fling into the wood-box, his eye rested on the bit of newspaper.

Why not read it? What if it held only advertisements? They would be more interesting than blank dullness.

The paper was torn in a jagged way, and the reading, whatever it was, began in the middle of a sentence. Winter tilted his chair back against the table, drew the small unshaded lamp nearer, and read :

“Struggle into opportunity. There are valiant souls who, without family prestige, without incitement on the part of father or mother, seem early in life to take a wide view, feel the necessity, and say, ‘By God’s help, with our own right hand, and what brain-power we have, we will attain what culture we can.’ And those hard-working fellows manage to go through college. They fight their way up into power ; and while ” —

The sentence closed, for Winter, as abruptly as it had begun ; but perhaps you would not have understood why his face grew slowly red, the color mounting even to his forehead, as he read the words again, and yet again, and brushed his hand across his eyes as if to remove a film gathering there, and read the words once more. It was a curious, and, looking at him now, a pitiful fact that to go to college had been one of his baby ambitions ; back went memory to the great, dreary room in the county poor-house, to a little bed in the further corner covered with a somewhat soiled and worn quilt, and a hollow-eyed father under the quilt, whose words were frequently interrupted by a short, dry cough, but who often and *often* said : “When my boy has graduated from some big

college, we will" — and then had followed some delicious day-dream, which had made the small boy laugh. When the father was gone, the ambition had lingered ; it was never mentioned even to Vine, but it had been the thought which had made Winter so impatient over his frequent detentions from the little red schoolhouse, and the many obstacles in the way of making rapid advancement there. Of course, with the bitter experience of three years of lawlessness, the ambition, even the *desire*, had faded. Now, it is sorrowful to have to tell you that there was awakened only a bitter memory ; that he could never go to college or to school of any sort again, he set down as a mournful fact. He had thrown away his chance, thrown it ignorantly away, not knowing at the time that a steady continuance in Josiah Griggs' farm-house was his open door to respectability and opportunity ; he realized it now, when he believed it too late ; his youth, he thought, had departed.

He had not been like these "valiant souls" of whom the extract told ; he had been "incited" by his father often and often, and he had failed his father ! It was this that made the film over his eyes. He had meant to do so much of which his father could be proud.

Long he leaned against the table, arms crossed, the bit of paper at his feet ; at last he stooped for it and slowly read it once more, then folded and placed it in his empty pocketbook. More think-

ing; arms still folded. Suddenly he flung them apart, doubled one strong fist and brought it down on the table in a way to make the little lamp tremble. It emphasized a resolve; some things he had thrown away; book knowledge, opportunities of that sort, were not for him. A hundred things which he had wanted to do, were not for him; farm-life, which he had hated, was open in a small way, and the doubled fist brought down with energy was to mark his decision to learn all that was possible about garden and farm and outdoor life.

"I'll fight my way up into so much, anyhow," he said aloud, with a grim smile; "if I am too late for all the rest, I won't be a fool and a vagabond; and I'll stick on here until there is nothing more for me to learn, and then I'll go where I can learn more in the same line."

In a sense, this resolve had been his salvation. It gave him occupation for those miserable evenings. It was only the next day he astonished Miss Putnam by asking if she had any book about gardens that he could look at. She had not, but she bore it in mind and asked the milkman who came for what milk she had to spare, and he brought her, the next morning, an agricultural paper, which Winter so steadily read and studied that he almost literally knew its contents by heart.

Nor was this the only paper which he secured. He made acquaintance with the milkman, who was a small farmer, a few miles out of town, and

had what to Winter was a library of agricultural literature. The man was good-natured and enterprising, and willing to lend. He grew, in time, to be proud of Miss Putnam's garden, and to feel that there was a little reflected glory from it which belonged to him.

In all these ways Winter Kelland had reached forward to the September afternoon when he waited for the down-train.

He had no interest in the person who was coming. She was a school-teacher; but she would not be likely to have either agricultural books or agricultural ideas. It was a startling innovation which was coming into Miss Putnam's life — this receiving a stranger and a young woman into her home. A month ago she would have scouted the possibility of such a thing; yet it had been brought about simply enough. Don had written: "By the way, Auntie, Miss Elice Force has just told me that she has secured the vacant post in the Fremont Street School, and will start for my old home next month. Then I told her about you, of course — what a blessed auntie you were, and all that; and — I hardly know how it came about, but I found myself promising that you would give her some advice as to a boarding-place. What can you suggest? It seems hard to think of a young lady boarding at Miller's. I suppose there is nothing better — is there? I wish, for Elice's sake, there were. She is a good friend of mine, Auntie.

If you can do anything for her comfort, I know you will, because it will please your boy Don."

That "boy Don" knew what he was about. If he had hinted that his dear auntie would do him a service by making a garden-path of her best silk gown for Miss Force to walk over, she might have sputtered a little and said, "What a ridiculous notion!" but in a half-hour she would have wiped her spectacles and said, "Dear boy! he knows his aunty would do anything in the world for him." And by this simple device was Miss Elice Force to be installed in the sweet and prim guest-chamber of the old Putnam homestead. Miss Putnam's heart was beating in a most irregular fashion on this afternoon in which she waited for the stranger to come into her home. But Winter Kelland cared nothing whatever about it; he had not even heard the stranger's name. She would have nothing to do with his life, nor he with hers. The down-train came at last, and he sprang from the wagon and stood by the horse's head waiting. It was not the hour for expecting an influx of home people—very few passengers stopped off from this train—therefore the trim maiden, dressed in two shades of brown, who looked about her for a moment, then came briskly toward Winter, had only two or three depot loungers to pass.

"Is this Miss Putnam's wagon?" she asked, and Winter remembered it afterward, that something in her voice sent him back to the woods of

his childhood and reminded him of little Vine. The fat little pony was waddling down the shady street before Miss Force spoke again.

"Do you live in this pretty little town, which looks as though all the inhabitants were taking an afternoon nap?"

"I stay here," said Winter, hesitating, and wondering if he really lived there. "I stay with Miss Putnam."

"Do you? Then, if we are to belong to the same family, we ought to be acquainted. Who do you suppose will introduce us? There's a yellow butterfly, but I don't propose to ask him; he's too frisky. Let us do it ourselves. I'm Elice Force, and I mean to put as much force into school-life this winter as I possibly can. Now, suppose you tell me who you are."

Winter laughed a little, and flushed a good deal. He had never been spoken to by a well-dressed, pretty young woman before in his life; he had never imagined that they spoke in this way.

"I'm just Win," he said — "Win Kelland, Miss Putnam's boy."

"Win! What a capital name! What do you propose to win, my friend?"

Winter laughed again, an embarrassed sort of laugh.

"Something to eat and wear, I suppose," he said at last, seeing that she waited for a reply.

"And an education, of course," she said quickly.

"That should be the first ambition of an American boy's life."

Poor soul ! she was a professed disciple of Him who said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you," yet she talked about an education being the first ambition of life !

The red on Winter's tanned face deepened until it would almost seem that it could burn ; and his reply was short — almost sharp :

"No, I have no such expectation ; I'm too old for that."

"Too old !" and the merriest little laugh rippled forth. "Why, I should never have taken you for a patriarch ! What can you mean ?"

"I'm seventeen years old, and have never had the first beginnings of an education," Winter said stiffly ; the laugh jarred him a little.

"But at seventeen people are young enough to accomplish whatever they undertake."

"Maybe that is because they know enough not to undertake what they can't accomplish."

He shot a keen look at her from under heavy eyelashes, then gave undivided attention to the pony.

She laughed again, a very jingle of a laugh, but this time it did not jar.

"Well, but really, now, that idea is absurd ; I would not harbor it for a moment, if I were you. Of course, it is a disadvantage not to be well started

by the time one is seventeen ; I would not seem to deny that. But I am perfectly safe in declaring that if circumstances have prevented a start until that time, or even later, a first-class education is still within reach of any boy who determines to have it. I know a gentleman who, when he was twenty years old, could not read ; yet he had determined some time before, that he would have a fair education if he lived ; and he accomplished it."

"How much of an education did he get?"

"He is a clergyman now."

Miss Force spoke the words very quietly. She had recognized a little undertone of sarcasm in the boy at her side. Evidently he did not believe that a very extensive education could be meant.

"And couldn't read when he was twenty!"

Winter was startled out of his sarcasm and reserve.

"Not a word ; I am well acquainted with him, and he gave me the facts himself ; but then everybody could not do what he did ; you see, he had a strong will, and he resolved to overcome obstacles."

"How did he set about it?"

"By doing what not one young man in a hundred would have the courage to do. He entered the primary department of a village school, and stood at the foot of an a b c class, and bore the taunts and the giggles of unfeeling simpletons, and worked with all the force of his strong nature, until he

reached a place where he could hold out a helping hand to some of those very gigglers."

Winter drew a long breath and said nothing ; he had somewhat prided himself on his own strong will, but such an experience as this he certainly was not ready to undergo. When he spoke again it was in a dissatisfied tone :

"Folks are not all alike ; if a boy has all he can do to earn his own bread and something to wear, how is he going to get time to study, let alone going to any school ?"

"This man of whom I am telling you had to earn his own living. Honestly, my friend, I am not making up a story to suit my fancy ; it is the truth ; he had not a soul to depend on in this world. He worked over hours and bought his time, and went to school for three months, and worked six months to make up for it. That was the beginning ; of course he found friends after a little, who offered encouragement and pointed out open doors. People who help themselves always do get about the sort of help they need. Beside, don't you know that determined people can accomplish a great deal in a short time ? I spent the month of August in a place where almost every young person one met was at work over books ; and I know by actual experience that more was accomplished there in four weeks than is generally done with one study in an entire winter."

Another school doing its work through August.

Winter distinctly remembered when and where he had heard something of this kind before.

"Queer time for a school," he could not help saying.

"Isn't it? and a queer school. Not like anything anywhere else in the world, I imagine. It is a sort of city or town in the woods; plenty of people and a post-office, and stores, and conveniences of that sort; and plenty of great old trees, and shaded walks, and old stumps with vines growing in them, and squirrels playing about; and people live in tents, many of them, and it is altogether unlike life anywhere else. But the teachers are the best that can be had for the money; and are as enthusiastic as their scholars. There are no unwilling scholars *made* to work by their parents; they are, as a rule, old enough to decide these matters for themselves; and are enthusiastic students, needing a little judicious holding back rather than urging. I suppose these are some of the reasons why such rapid progress is made."

"Whoa," said Winter, and the fat pony drew up suddenly before the square, old-fashioned house which Miss Force had been admiring silently ever since she caught a glimpse of it through the trees.

"This is Miss Putnam's place, ma'am, and that is Miss Putnam just coming down the steps."

CHAPTER XII.

CIRCLES.

THERE'S no use in talking," said Miss Putnam, giving a vigorous stir to the sugar in her coffee, and taking an energetic bite from her muffin; "I knew it couldn't be done. There are certain things you can do in some places, and in some you can't. There are only two kinds of people here: part of them are so crowded to death with work that they haven't time for anything else, and part of them are so completely tuckered out amusing themselves that they can't think of anything else. The last thing in life they want is a literary society; if it was a new kind of dance they would be here before breakfast to see how to get it up; and they'd have the thing cut and dried by night, and meet somewhere to hop it out. I wouldn't be afraid to venture every muffin on this table that you were asked if part of the time wasn't to be spent in dancing."

Miss Force's eyes, as well as her mouth, laughed out at this. "It was mentioned once or twice," she said demurely.

“There,” said Miss Putnam, with an emphasis which required the laying down of knife and fork, just as she was about to cut a bit of steak, “I knew it as well as though I had been along with you. ‘Once or twice’; if you would say a dozen times, I venture you would be nearer the truth. It does beat all, this place does, for dancing. If there is a class of beings which the Creator made with brains located in their heels and toes, and with just enough to keep ’em flopping around all the time, they live in this village. People can’t come together to plan about a church supper or fair without, after they have talked for a half-hour or so, pushing back the tables and setting to work; as though spinning about in each other’s arms was the *real* thing to accomplish, and the other was just a side issue. And if you try to get up anything under the sun, somebody, after the first five minutes, will be sure to say, ‘Hadn’t we better plan for a little dancing to amuse the young folks?’ I’m sick of it! One night our minister got waked up a little; he had been away for a week and attended a prayer-meeting, where the people did something beside hiding behind posts and looking at their watches after they got there; and he called a sort of council to discuss ways of getting young people enough interested to come out to prayer-meeting. When he explained what he wanted, there was a dead silence; if he had asked them to plan a way for the young people to discover the channel to

the north pole, they couldn't have looked more dismayed; and the very ones who had done all the talking only the night before, when we were planning an oyster supper, and knew just exactly what must and must not be attempted, sat as dumb as oysters. I had been pretty well wrought up the night before, and my nerves hadn't cooled down yet; so I burst into the awful pause with this suggestion: 'After we have had fifteen minutes or so of prayer-meeting, if we'd move back the seats and close up with a little dance, I think likely they'd come.' "

Miss Force laughed so that the coffee cup she was in the act of carrying to her mouth trembled and nearly lost its balance. "You don't mean you spoke those words out in the council?"

"I do mean just that; and a pretty sensation it created! I heard that some of them thought I was very irreverent; I don't understand why; if dancing is everlastingly the proper thing, why not have it to help draw? The only places in this town where they don't have it week-days are prayer-meetings and funerals; and our young people apparently look upon those occasions as equally doleful. Well, so you didn't get a recruit for your literary effort?"

"Not a positive promise; several are considering it. I think some would have joined had they not been slightly suspicious of it; they seemed to think it was a scheme for money making."

"Just so. And who was to make the money? Fifty cents a year for mapping out a course of reading, and seeing that the books are ready for you, and sending bushels of papers through the mail to you, must furnish an immense income certainly; *somebody* ought to get rich by it somehow! Was the 'somehow' made plain to you?"

"Not very," said Miss Force, with another laugh; she enjoyed this breezy talk as only a bright, merry-hearted girl could. Miss Putnam was a positive elixir to her.

"Some of the ladies thought the books ought to be furnished free of expense."

"Of course they ought! The *idea* of expecting people to accommodate you by joining a reading circle, and then having to buy their own books! It is an imposition, you see. All reading matter free, and a small fee given to each one who gets through a book, with the promise of a dance at the end of each five lines; that's the programme you will have to get up if you accomplish anything in this part of the world. Mark my words; I've lived here a quarter of a century, *and I know*. O, well! that isn't to say that we haven't a few sensible people scattered around; many of the boys and girls are hard at work in school; doing as much of the literary as their brains will endure; of course, I leave them out of the calculation; then there are some so hard worked to keep up appearances that every breath of life about them

has to engage in the struggle; you can't expect *them* to read anything but the fashion plates, to see whether, after they have spent every inch of leisure time for seven weeks in ripping up their best dress and turning it upside down, the fashions have changed so that, after all, it must be ripped up again and put hind side before. Such as these haven't time for anything but an occasional dance between the rippings up. I'm reasonable; I don't expect impossible things; but after all these extremes are counted out, it does seem as though there might be about two who had a few minutes of leisure and were willing to use their heads instead of their heels; but I don't know one. The truth is, my boy Win is the most hopeful specimen I know of in the place; he *reads* in a certain line and makes very good use of what he gets."

The part of the sentence which referred to him had been begun with an amused little laugh; but before it ended Miss Putnam's face was grave and she looked ready to combat earnestly, perhaps somewhat fiercely, any one who should question her boy Win's right to read what he would.

Miss Force was at once interested. She had been in this home for nearly three months; and, beyond an occasional nod to Win as he passed her with his arms full of wood, or with foaming milk-pails, she had not come in contact with him nor given him a thought. The energetic little talk which she had held with him on her ride from the

depot had been in consequence of her propensity for talking earnestly in certain lines, whatever her opportunity, and not because he had awakened a special interest in her mind.

Now, however, the mention of his name and the statement concerning him, recalled certain keen flashes of feeling she had noticed in his eyes that day. "So Win reads, does he? In what direction? Dime novels and the like?"

"Not in my house," said Miss Putnam, with a firm setting of her lips. "No, he reads agricultural papers and books; everything of that sort on which he can lay his hands; and that is not saying a great deal. I have thought of subscribing to the library in the city, for the sake of his getting such books as would help him in his notions, only there would be the going in after them and the endless temptations which would open to him on every side if I did. I've thought it a great wonder that the boy didn't hanker after the city and make excuses to go; but he doesn't; and I've been so afraid that he would get drawn into mischief, that I've actually gone without things I wanted rather than send him in on errands. I might get the books for him myself; maybe I will, when I get waked up to that pitch of interest."

"Agricultural papers," said Miss Force, thoughtfully; "that isn't a bad idea."

"Of course it isn't; these potatoes are not a bad idea, either;" as she spoke she broke one of the

floury things in two and, "wrapping her napkin around the shell," proceeded to eating it a la Holland.

"There are no such potatoes in this part of the world except from my garden ; Win tried some sort of experiment with the soil and it worked to a charm. He would have been quite a boy, I believe, if he had had half a chance ; the way he pores over those papers is curious ; spells out half the words, I suppose ; the poor fellow has been an orphan since he was less than eight ; if the right kind of people had had him then, they might have made something of him ; he has real good judgment ; I shouldn't wonder if he made quite a farmer."

"Suppose I make a reading circle out of him," said Miss Force, with her merriest outburst of laughter. "I seem to have failed in other directions, and I'm bound to have a circle out here ; I told the girls I would. If I read, and he reads, that will be a 'society,' will it not ?"

"And I," said Miss Putnam ; "you might put me in ; I read a book occasionally. If you must have a reading circle, Miss Force, I advise you to take Win and me, for you won't do better in this region ; only I do hope the readings will not have to wind up with a dance !"

"They shall not," laughed Miss Force ; "and there shall be no expense ; I'll furnish the books myself and charge no fee."

"Very well ; if, in addition, you will give us a little present now and then, by way of encouragement, we may be induced to accommodate you."

There was more of the talk, frothing off into unmitigated fun, neither lady having an idea of anything but to amuse the other ; yet out of it was born the curiosity which prompted Miss Force to look up that evening just as Win had placed an armful of wood in her neat little box, and was retiring. "Good-evening," she said pleasantly ; "is it still snowing ?"

"Yes'm, and blowing ; I guess it is going to be a very hard storm. Shall I put some more wood on the fire ?"

"If you please ; isn't an open fire a cheery thing to study by ? Did you ever try it ?"

"No, ma'am," in a low, grave tone.

There was something about this brisk girl and her pleasant room, and her open fire, and her red-covered table, piled high with books and papers, which made Win think of a home ; such a home as he had imagined, but never enjoyed. There had been a house to which he used to carry milk, long ago, where a boy of fifteen sat before a red-covered table, with the flames from the wood fire on the hearth lighting up his curly head, and worked over his books ; mother near at hand with her sewing, and father just at the other side of the table with the newspaper. It was a picture Win had carried with him ; he thought then that

if he had such a place as that he could study. He looked at Miss Force's table, and thought so again; thought it with a sigh.

"What do you do with these long winter evenings?"

"Not much of anything; I read some, when I can get things to read."

"That is good; provided you make a wise selection; careful reading is a very important feature in an education."

A very faint smile hovered over Winter's face; he thought that he and this young woman of culture were carrying on this conversation from entirely different levels.

"I don't make a selection," he said, with quiet sarcasm; "there's nothing to select from. Sometimes, when the milkman doesn't forget to bring it to me, I have a newspaper, and I read it through, from beginning to end, advertisements and all. Then, sometimes, I read it all over again; just for the sake of having something to do."

"A capital idea, provided it was worth reading in the first place. But if you would like something else, I have a few books which I might lend you."

Winter glanced over at the neat shelf filled with books, and smiled; it seemed to him that Miss Force had a great library.

"Thank you," he said; and simple as the words were, they conveyed a great deal; there was a sound in them which might almost be translated

by the word "greedy." Miss Force heard it, and said within herself :

"It isn't possible that this boy has to 'spell out' his words ; readers of that sort never long for more."

"How shall I know what to choose for you?" she said, rising and going toward the shelf. "What are your tastes?"

"Have you any books which tell about hotbeds?"

Miss Force paused with her hand on a book, turned toward him and laughed.

"I am afraid not," she said ; "I am ignorant in all those directions ; my opportunities never opened their way ; Miss Putnam told me something about your garden. I am curious to know one thing : Do you choose such subjects because all your inclinations point toward them or because circumstances called your attention that way?"

Winter's face flushed a little.

"If I should tell it just as it is, I might say such subjects chose me ; it is the one thing I have a chance to work at, and I thought maybe I could start a little hotbed, if I could get hold of the right way of beginning ; as for liking it, the one thing I resolved when a little fellow that I'd certainly never be, was a farmer. I never shall love it amazingly, but what can a fellow do?"

"Perhaps a 'fellow' couldn't possibly do better than that ; but he wants to be sure of it. I am going into town to-morrow, after school, and I'll try to find what you need at the library. I think

a hotbed is an excellent idea ; Miss Putnam would be pleased, I know ; she is very proud of her garden. Meantime, my friend, why don't you go systematically to work to get the sort of education which will help you to be a farmer of general intelligence ? One who can command the respect of his neighbors on other subjects as well as farming ? ”

“ How can I ? ” The words were spoken almost fiercely. “ There is no way to begin ; it is nonsense to talk about my going to school ; and I've no books, nor brains, to start with.”

“ All that is nonsense,” said Miss Force, quietly ; “ there is no old saying truer than ‘ Where there is a will, there is a way.’ There is nothing to prevent your going to school to yourself, every evening, in that neat kitchen down-stairs ; you know I would be willing to lend you the few books you need, to start with, for I have just offered ; and as for brains, if you had none, you would not care about having lost a good deal of time already, and I can see in your face that you do care. When a sensible person has made a misstep, the thing for him is to undo as much of the mischief as he can, as quickly as he can ; it is the only way he has of showing the difference between himself and a fool.”

It was a hazardous sentence ; she knew nothing of any missteps of his ; had never heard of Mrs. Josiah Griggs and a runaway ; but something about him suggested the fancy that he was brooding over what “ might have been.”

CHAPTER XIII.

PHOTOGRAPHS.

WINTER made no reply ; neither — although his hand had been all this while on the door-knob — did he depart. Miss Force, giving seemingly careless glances at his face, was a good deal interested in its developments ; she believed she had touched the right spring. The boy was glooming over what he might have done, to the extent that it was in a degree paralyzing what he ought now to do.

“ If I were you,” she began again, “ I would take hold of this thing with a will, and educate myself ; first, in a general line, such as would fit any occupation which you might finally choose ; then, exhaustively, in the direction which you choose, or which opens — farming, if that seems the thing. There is certainly no more honorable way of earning a living ; but there is no sense in being an ignorant farmer.”

“ What would you begin on ? ”

“ Arithmetic,” said Miss Force as promptly as though she had anticipated the inquiry and pre-

pared the answer. In point of fact she had done no such thing. She was surprised with the question. It hinted at a decision which she had feared would have to be argued up to by long processes. "I certainly should," seeing his surprised look. "It is the basis of all education ; a sort of dignified foundation on which to build. A certain knowledge of figures is, you know, really necessary in all practical life ; and if you are going to be a first-class farmer, you need to be able to calculate with a flash of your eye what you can realize on nine hundred and sixty-three bushels of potatoes provided you sell them for thirty-seven and a half cents a bushel."

Winter flashed a gleam of intelligent fun at her, then dropped his eyes meditatively on the carpet again.

"I had not mastered a single idea in long division when I left school," he said at last, "and I have not had occasion to use any figures since, to speak of." It was an admission which made the blood glow all over his sunburned face.

"Very well," said Miss Force, without a shade of surprise or dismay in voice or manner, "then I should say you could not too quickly set about mastering long division and all the other intricacies. I do not know a better place or time than a clean, quiet kitchen and long, undisturbed evenings for such work. If you like, to begin, I will lend you an arithmetic which I brought with me.

It is one of the best in print, and is entirely at your service. If you need a hint at any time, I shall be glad to give it. I have an affection for the book. Will you take it down with you and glance at it to-night?—since I cannot furnish you with any agricultural reading. I think that is an excellent idea of yours, and to-morrow I will try to get the latest views on it for you.”

“Thank you,” said Winter.

He had no more words at command; but Miss Force, looking at him, did not need more. The arithmetic was in his hand; she had a feeling that its ideas would be transferred to his mind before many months.

She was gleeful after he had gone.

“I believe there is something in the boy,” she said aloud. “I’ll have a reading circle out of him yet. But what a queer book to begin on! An arithmetic! It isn’t in the course, but if it doesn’t lead to it, I shall be disappointed. I had my hand on this nice, blue-covered book to experiment with as a sort of a reader, when he arrested me by having an idea of his own. A boy who can set himself to studying over hotbeds, with a view to making one, is worth starting. There is no reason why he shouldn’t acquire a decent, self-respecting education in common English. Well, Elice Force, everybody might not see it, but you have done a good thing for our circle to-night, I believe; lived up to the spirit of it, if not the letter.”

It is true, my dear lady, you have touched one of the inner circles of your circle, and extended a helping hand ; but the everlasting pity is that you stopped just there. An arithmetic is an excellent thing, and if it shall happen that Winter Kelland shall give it enough attention to become an expert in calculating his hotbed accounts, I shall be glad for him and for you. But suppose for a moment you had, in connection with the arithmetic, said one little word to impress Winter Kelland with the thought that there was a Book above all other books, the studying of which would open for him the gate of true wisdom ? And suppose he had taken from your hand a copy of that Book, and had given it but a few minutes of the hour which you hoped he would nightly devote to arithmetic ; and suppose it had opened for him a well of knowledge at which he resolved to drink forever ? And suppose, because of this one simple act of yours, there should, through him, be led hundreds and hundreds of souls into the way of life, to reach out in their turn for others, what would the harvest be to you ? Poor soul !

Upon our unseen banner flames
The mystic two-edged sword ;
We hold its legend in our hearts —
“ The Spirit and the Word.”

She had sung the words only last summer ; again and again had they floated out among the “ whispering trees ” and thrilled her soul with their

majestic meaning. She told herself then that this circle to which her life was linked was a grand, heaven-reaching idea, and she rejoiced in being one of the number to push its influence. She was pushing it, eagerly, gleefully ; seeing in Winter Kelland and her old arithmetic mystic chords which should eventually intertwine with it ; and yet, there had not even been suggested to her the thought that, sorely as the boy needed an education, he had greater need for that knowledge which according to the Master of all learning was to be sought first.

Do you imagine that the boy, Winter, did not think of it ? There was one bit of reading which he had omitted to mention. Do you remember that tiny book ? It took but a very short time to get through with it ; and Winter, by reason of the utter poverty of his resources, had been driven to its re-reading until many of the sentences clung to his memory. Some of them were very startling ; as is nearly always the case with these little books, the verses had been selected with special reference to Christians ; they seemed to Winter to speak only to such. Instead of remembering that he was bound in honor to be one of these, and therefore that the words ought to apply to him, he amused himself by trying to fit them to the practical lives of the professing Christians about him.

Would not those unsuspecting ladies, Miss Putnam and Miss Force, have been amazed if they could have known that the boy whom they were

trying to help, the one by decent dinners and clean clothes, the other by arithmetics, was at work studying their lives to see how well they fitted a book two inches square, which he carried in his pocket.

Winter entered the kitchen, arithmetic in hand, with very little idea that he should do more than look through the book, because he did not know how to refuse Miss Force. He believed that he was too old for arithmetic; still, for the sake of old times, he should like to glance through it.

There were both pleasant and unpleasant associations connected with the study; he remembered distinctly that in the mental arithmetic class he was one of the brightest pupils; when those bewildering problems involving lightning processes in the four fundamental rules were given, his hand had often been the first to wave aloft indicating victory; and his teacher's hearty commendation was often provoked thereby; those were golden memories; but following hard after them was the picture of certain miserable days when the intricacies of long division came upon him unawares, and after several wretched failures and such distressing embarrassments as to make him incapable for the time being of giving the sum of two and two, he was remanded to his seat, with the humiliating announcement that he was a hopeless blockhead, and would do well to join the class in addition. Recalling it, Winter could almost feel the rush of

crimson which he knew had suffused face and neck at the time ; then there stole across the page of memory a pleasant vision ; a fair little face framed in curly, brown hair, out of which looked a pair of very expressive eyes ; one moment they flashed indignant scorn at the impatient teacher, then melted into sympathy and sought his, while the lips murmured low :

“He is just as hateful as he *can be* ! All the girls think so. You would have had it right in another minute if he hadn’t hurried and bothered you.”

Dear little Vine, his *one* friend ! Had she been right ! If he had waited and been patient, and borne with Mrs. Josiah, and plodded on, would he in time have mastered long division and all the rest of it, and have held this arithmetic in his hand to-night as a toy with which he had long been through, instead of the mystery it was to him ?

Such memories and such questions made him give a long, heavy sigh, as he drew the lamp closer and opened the book. The town clock on the church tower struck seven just as he read the familiar words, “Arithmetic is the science of numbers.”

The clock struck eight and nine, and a half-hour afterward Miss Putnam opened the kitchen door and said : “Win, did you know it was going on to ten o’clock ?”

The boy gave a violent start, as though he had been caught in the midst of a crime; ran both fingers through his masses of hair and looked up in a bewildered way.

"What are you reading?" asked Miss Putnam in doubtful tone; his manner was very suspicious; could it be possible that Satan and a dime novel had held quiet possession of her kitchen all this evening! She pushed her spectacles into place and leaned over the book which still lay open on the table. "For the land's sake!" she said in tones which might have been translated to mean several things; but she only added, after a moment's pause, "Well, I should think it would be a good plan for you to go to bed."

"Yes'm," said Winter, absently; his thoughts not on his words; he had been bewitched.

The words of the arithmetic had been to him like photographs; when he learned such a sentence he sat on a stool in the sunshine beside his father, who was resting in an old chair on the southern porch at the county house. Over the leaf was the lesson which father had explained by putting two leaves from the currant bush on one side, and three from the gooseberry bush on the other, and proving conclusively to his bewildered mind that one could not add the gooseberry leaves to the currant leaves and make *five* of either; they *would* continue to be currant leaves and gooseberry leaves, however he might try to unite them.

He smiled tenderly, now, as he realized for the first time what an ingenious device it was, on his father's part.

The addition table showed him a view of his father, pale, coughing often, propped up in bed, with a bit of smoothly planed board and a stub of a pencil, making carefully, large figures in a circle, for him to "gallop around." He remembered the gleeful laugh of triumph with which he displayed, weeks afterward, his ability to begin at any figure of the circle his father chose, and rush like a race horse "around the curve." He remembered his bewildered delight, when, later still, he made the discovery that those nine figures, arranged in a circle and studied in the way his father planned, had made it difficult for his teacher in the village school to arrange a row of figures in such a manner that he could not promptly give their sum. So much for photographs; by this time he was interested in seeing how much he remembered of the old lessons; and astonished, presently, to discover that he could not be so very *old*, for these well-learned lessons came back to him with a vividness of yesterday's events; in less than an hour he was confronting his enemy, long division; and seemed to himself to be standing before the blackboard again as he slowly read and pondered the rule. Then he felt in his pocket for a pencil, took the margin of his last agricultural paper for a slate, and resolved upon attempting an example, trying

to follow out the direction of the rule. It was long and somewhat intricate in its processes ; it involved time and thought ; the more, as his unused powers in those directions moved much more slowly when put to the test with a problem, than they did in the race through the "tables."

He would not have been disappointed at failure, for it may be said that failure was what he expected ; but I do not know that many of you will be able to understand the strange thrill which he felt to his very finger-tips on making the discovery that his quotient and the one given in the book agreed precisely !

From that moment he was lost to all outward circumstances, or to any knowledge of the flight of time. The fire died out in the great kitchen stove, the oil burned low in his lamp, every inch of available room on the eight-page newspaper was covered with figures, and still the boy figured on, regardless of printer's ink, which was interfering sadly with his work. Seeing his utter absorption and his utter confusion, what could Miss Putnam suspect, less than a dime novel !

"That lamp has too little oil to go to bed by, and there isn't another, except the great big ones, which ought not to be carried out in this wind. I did not know you wanted to sit up until midnight ; can't you take the lantern ? Where is the little lantern ? Did you put it in order ?"

"Yes'm ; it holds seven hundred and eighty-two

barrels and twenty-seven gallons ; that's exactly right."

"What !" said Miss Putnam, sharply.

And Winter dropped his book on the floor and stood upright.

"I — I didn't mean that, Miss Putnam ; I meant — yes, ma'am, I have a lamp ; or, no, ma'am, I haven't ; I mean I can go to bed in the dark as well as not. O, yes'm ! the little lantern is all ready to use ; it is out in the wood-shed on its nail ; I didn't *dream* it was so late."

"You act as though you had lost all your wits," said Miss Putnam ; but the sharpness had already gone out of her voice. She could not help being a little impressed with the thought that he had lost his wits over arithmetic.

And as Winter lighted the little lantern and, with the aid of a broom, made his way through the rapidly accumulating snow to the wood-house chamber, he said aloud to the north wind :

"I shall go right straight through that book !"

CHAPTER XIV.

EXPERIMENTS.

FROM that time began a new experience for the Putnam kitchen. Heretofore eight o'clock, or even as early as half-past seven, on evenings when the agricultural paper had grown old, its lonely inmate could have been seen preparing to retire to the wood-house chamber. All this was changed. Nine o'clock, indeed often ten, and occasionally eleven, saw him bending over book and slate, intent on rows and rows of figures, which daily succumbed to his control. Over this fact Winter Kelland was growing jubilant. It was such a continued surprise and delight to find that, as he studied and thought and worked, gradually his brain cleared, and what looked at first like a hopeless confusion of words, developed into ideas which he could understand and make his own.

He made rapid progress; so rapid that he was almost astonished at himself. Yet I do not think, after all, that it was phenomenal progress. Given the same conditions and any determined mind would have accomplished the same. The truth is,

he might have been said to "live and move and have his being" in an atmosphere of figures. While he sawed or split the wood, or made broad, smooth paths through the snow, or held the reins while the pony waddled from point to point, doing errands for his mistress, he was always at work over some problem which had interested him the night before. Even while eating his solitary dinner, he was frequently seen to drop his fork, take a bit of pencil from one pocket and a tiny home-made tablet from the other, and work rapidly over certain figures for a few minutes, his face generally lighting up under the result. His habits in other respects began to change; he did not neglect the weekly newspaper; in fact he looked for it with as much interest as before, but he began to discriminate between the readings; to select that which would be of service to him, and pass the rest as something for which he had no time. The advertisements over which he used to pore had lost their charm; work pressed in these days; people must look after their own advertisements; he would just give a glance to see if there was anything new in the line of garden implements, such as he would like to have if he could get them, and then push on. In the same way he read the book which Miss Force had brought him from the library. It proved to be a collection of articles on miscellaneous subjects. He read with care, and with several repetitions, what he could find about hotbeds,

making notes for his private use, but returned the book at the end of the stipulated week, with the statement in answer to inquiries, that he had not taken time to read anything but that which he wanted to use ; and Miss Force listened to the answer with smiling satisfaction. When she carefully selected the book, it had been with a view to interesting him in several other topics of which it treated ; but remembering that this boy, who, a week before, had confessed to her that he knew nothing about long division, had that morning waylaid her at the gate to ask a question concerning complex fractions, she was fully satisfied as to his lack of time. As the weeks passed, she watched him curiously ; his interest did not flag for a moment. She was often interviewed as to the meaning of this or that term, and once as to the possibility of there being a mistake in the "answer" which the book gave to a certain problem ; but on her assuring him that she knew the book to be correct, he had taken it away again without further comment, and had been up until quite eleven o'clock that night. But when he brought word the next evening he answered her question with a quiet "Yes'm, I found out my mistake after going over the work just eleven times."

"The boy will be a mathematician," she said gleefully to herself, and waited. Miss Putnam was watching, too ; a little doubtfully at first. She was not sure whether a "little learning" might not be

"a dangerous thing;" but as her work was done with the same neatness and precision as before, and as quiet schemes for improvement went steadily on, she grew less doubtful; and when, one day, sitting at his dinner in the kitchen, after listening to her being involved in a maze of confusion by the glib-tongued collector at the door, he suddenly appeared on the scene to assure the collector, respectfully enough, but firmly, that he had made a mistake, and given sixty-three cents less change than he should; and when, after much talking between them, Miss Putnam standing aside the while, the glib-tongued young man confessed himself in the wrong and handed out the sixty-three cents, with an apology, Miss Putnam's doubts took flight entirely. It was that very evening that she changed the little kitchen lamp for a large shaded one, saying as she set it down:

"There, if you want to pore over your figures until midnight, that lamp will hold oil enough to last you; but it isn't a good plan for young folks to get in the habit of sitting up late."

Miss Force, quietly biding her time, resolved presently on another move; it would not do to have her student a one-sided man, educated in hard figures only. On a stormy evening in early March, Winter brought some lovely knots for her open-grate fire, arranged them skillfully to make the room a blaze of light, then rising, took from his pocket the arithmetic, and, with the simple

statement that he was much obliged to her for the book, and had finished it, was about to leave the room.

"Finished, is it?" she said, controlling the temptation to express surprise; "but may you not want to review it? You may keep the book until I go home if you wish; I have no present use for it."

"No," he said, thanking her, *he* had no further use for it; he had reviewed and *reviewed* it, until he knew he could do any example in it, almost in the dark.

Miss Force again controlled any outward manifestation of pleasure.

"What next?" she asked.

"What next!" he repeated, and turned from the door to look at her, a half-smile on his face. Then, seeing that she waited for a further answer: "That is just exactly what I don't know. I suppose a farming book of some sort; but I don't feel sure what."

"I would make algebra the next thing."

"Algebra." He spoke the word half under his breath, with a sort of awe; he knew the meaning of it, and had looked upon it as dwelling on heights, and consequently not for him.

"I certainly should; you have shown a taste for mathematics which ought to be cultivated; it will not injure the quality of your farming in the least, provided farming should be the thing; mean-

time, I should select something for general reading to rest my mind a little between the lessons ; rest it, and at the same time cultivate it in another line."

"What line?"

"Oh ! as to that, I think you might follow your tastes ; come to my little shelf and see what you can find for a sort of between times ; and if you decide in favor of the algebra, here is a copy which I can spare."

His eyes thanked her ; but he said no words. However, he crossed to the little shelf, his face aglow with some feeling greater than embarrassment. It was well filled with a careful selection from standard authors ; with some idea of attempting this experiment soon, Miss Force had but a few hours before rearranged it, so that the books which she judged might possibly be more nearly in line with his tastes occupied a central position. He touched none of them, but took from around the corner, for the shelf turned the corner and crossed the jog in the chimney, the book which she perhaps would have been the least likely to select for him. It was one of her reading course ; but was much more like a text-book than a selection for reading ; and, in short, it had not even occurred to her in connection with her plans for Winter. He opened the volume at random ; too much embarrassed, Miss Force thought to have a clear idea of what he was doing. However, it was

plain that his attention was almost instantly arrested; that he forgot himself and the presence of another. As he read he suddenly grasped with his right hand his left arm above the elbow, bending the arm at the same moment; then stretched it to its full length, keeping his fingers on the muscles.

"That's true!" he exclaimed; and, seeming at the moment to remember Miss Force's presence, turned a very red face toward her. She had been watching him curiously, and now advanced and glanced at what he had been reading.

"If you grasp the arm tightly with your hand, just above the elbow joint, and bend the forearm, you will feel the muscle on the inside swell and become hard and prominent.' Oh! you were interested in the action of the muscles, were you not? Physiology is a very interesting and sensible study. That book is arranged for a fourteen weeks' course in school, and wonderfully well adapted to its work, I think."

"I like it," said Winter, absently; he was already reading another sentence and experimenting as to its truth.

"Take it with you if you like," said Miss Force, cordially. "It is not exactly a book to read, yet you will like to look at the diagrams, perhaps, while you are resting from the algebra. It is one of the books marked out for my reading circle; but I have finished it."

So Winter went away with his prizes ; an algebra tucked under his arm and "Human Physiology" in his hand, leaving Miss Force to laugh and say :

" I must tell Miss Putnam of that ; he is getting ahead of her ; actually taken one of the books of the course to read, when I haven't succeeded in getting her to do more than look at the pictures. What a queer boy he is ! Really I believe he would have made a scholar with half a chance. What if he should plunge into algebra as he did arithmetic ? Actually work his way through a regular course of mathematics ! Elice Force, you would better do all you can for him ; he may be famous some day ; how very funny it was to see him put Steele's statements to the test of experiment. Prof. Bowen would have been delighted. ' There is a scholarly mind for you,' he would have said ; ' scholarly by nature.' Well, it may be so ; at least I will foster the taste all I can. But it is very queer ? What possessed him to reach around into the corner and take that particular book ? It was not the one I had planned for."

Nor had Winter planned for it ; even years afterward he called it an "accident." Yet, as he sat that evening literally poring over the book, he discovered to himself a new taste ; here was a book which absorbed him as even figures did not. The arithmetic he had resolved to conquer, and had experienced steady pleasure in finding himself

able to overcome its obstacles ; but this history of the human frame, this careful explanation of bones and muscles, and tissues, bewitched him ; overwhelmed him. He began with the first sentence : “ The skeleton, or framework, of the ‘ house we live in ’ is composed of about two hundred bones,” and read on with almost breathless interest, through coarse and fine print, until he came to a series of “ Practical Questions.” Over these he paused, read the first, found that he could not answer it, went back over the ground he had just travelled, to discover the answer, found and absorbed it ; then took the next question, and thus felt his way through the chapter, going back as often as necessary, finally deliberately reading the entire portion over again, and yet again until, to his intense satisfaction, he could answer each of those questions. Then, with a long-drawn breath of satisfaction, he laid it aside.

“ I’ll look into this algebra, now,” he said, “ because I’ve made up my mind to know algebra ; but I like that thing as I never liked a book before in my life ; I’ll read it through, and then I’ll learn it by heart.”

This, in the course of the long March evenings, he literally did ; and when, at Miss Force’s suggestion, they “ compared notes ” as to their knowledge of the book, she arose from the ordeal with a sense of marked respect for her pupil.

“ Mr. Steele would feel honored, indeed, if he

could hear you," she said, heartily; "you have literally made the book your own. It is a wonder you did not learn the poetical quotations also."

"Some of them I did," said Winter, with a little sparkle of satisfaction in his eyes; "I learned this one the first morning after you lent me the book:

Not in the world of light alone,
Where God has built his blazing throne,
Nor yet alone on earth below,
With belted seas that come and go,
And endless isles of sunlit green,
Is all thy Maker's glory seen —
Look in upon thy wondrous frame,
Eternal wisdom still the same!

"I think that is true," he said, drawing a deep breath; "I used to think, when I was a little boy, that machinery was very wonderful; and that I would study into a good deal of it if I ever had the chance; but I have come to the conclusion that 'the human frame,' as that verse calls it, is the most wonderful machinery ever made."

By which you will see that he was overcoming his reserve, so far as Miss Force was concerned. She had been so heartily interested in his algebraic studies, had given him helpful hints so many times at just the points where they were needed, that, so far as she was concerned, he had laid aside his long-nursed belief that no human being cared in the least about him; for some reason she cared enough to be steadily helpful and suggestive, and

he had thawed toward her considerable. Certainly, during the months just past he had made progress ; he began to realize it fully himself ; to take heart in several ways, to have a glimmering belief that a respectable portion of an education was still within his grasp ; to determine to have whatever he could secure in that line or any other, by persistent industry and dogged resolution ; to determine that he would not, after all, be a farmer ; that he would be, in the years ahead, something for which he was not yet ready, but toward which he would work with all his might ; and to that end he would read and study everything about the human frame on which he could lay his hands.

It was not winter any more ; the soft spring days were upon them ; the long, lamp-lighted evenings were gone ; there was a very busy outside world to look after ; the season of ploughing and planting, and transplanting, was already upon them ; Winter was ready for it, and carried on his share of the work with vigor and skill ; he was still studying the agricultural papers ; he had constructed his rude imitation of a hotbed, and, as a result, surveyed with much pride certain plants which were fully three weeks ahead of even the milkman's ; but all these things were now simply as means to an end. Whether he could ever accomplish the desire of his heart remained so much a matter of doubt that he was entirely silent on the subject ; even Miss Force being able to guess at it only from the class

of books which he steadily asked her to bring him from the library. Meantime, he had made excellent progress with his algebra, and had even begun on a Latin grammar, which Miss Force would not have ventured to offer, but which he boldly asked for one evening. During this entire time, she, looking on with the deepest interest, pleased, surprised, proud of him, had been as utterly silent before him in regard to the one all-important subject, the A B C of all wisdom, as though she had no knowledge in that direction; were not pledged to count it always of supreme importance.

Is this unnatural, do you say? I can only answer that to me there seem to be a great many unnatural people in the world.

CHAPTER XV.

SAGE CONCLUSIONS.

I DO not mean that she forgot this important subject utterly ; that, indeed, would have been unnatural, perhaps impossible, in an honest Christian. She gave it many passing thoughts ; wished there were some way of interesting Winter in these matters ; bemoaned the fact that he seemed to have not one spark of natural interest in religion. Twice she said to him :

“Why don’t you stay to Sunday-school ? The boys in the Bible-class look as though they were having real pleasant times.”

But when he answered briefly that he did not know the boys, and did not belong to “their kind of folks,” she accepted the statement as important, and let the question drop. She sighed over the fact that he took scraps of paper to church, on which he sat and figured during the sermon. She accepted it as another proof that he was utterly indifferent in regard to all these things.

Once or twice she had been on the verge of asking him if he did not think the Bible would be an

important book to study ; but the fear of repelling him, of setting up a barrier between them, so that she could not help him in any direction, deterred her. People are so curiously afraid of being repellent on such subjects. I have constantly observed this, and unless Satan has a good deal to do with it, I do not understand it. At least I do not propose to enter into an analysis of Miss Force's mind for you. The fact remains that, whatever the cause, she let the winter and the spring and the early summer pass, without speaking one earnest sentence to Winter Kelland on the subject which she believed to be of supreme importance. And she was, at the same time, sufficiently interested in him to start him in arithmetic, to lend a helping hand through the intricacies of algebra, and to keep his possible tastes in mind whenever she visited the city library. If you can make her conduct seem consistent, by all means do so.

I can give you some of Winter's conclusions ; he was by no means so indifferent nor so blind as Miss Force supposed. He occasionally listened to the preacher between cipherings. When an illustration bearing on practical life was used, he listened intently ; he believed in the preacher as a scholarly man, who liked books, had a great many of them, and liked to read to the people a sermon which he had prepared from them. That he was deeply interested in his — Winter's soul, for instance — Winter did not believe. Why

should he? He had once brought the minister from the cars to his own house, and had been asked questions intelligently concerning the raising of cabbages. The minister was at that time engaged in transplanting some young plants. Winter had no difficulty in seeing and believing that he was interested in them. He had often watched Miss Force in the same way. His little two-inch-square book, you will remember, helped him to be wise in this direction. She impressed him as one who was unselfishly disposed to do all she could for him in the lines which she deemed important. She believed in education, and had urged him to reach after one; she believed in arithmetic, and had encouraged him through it; she believed in algebra, and had given him many a wise lift in his tug with it; she believed in her reading circle, and often talked with him about it; and was pleased that he had almost committed one of its chosen books to memory. Did she believe in the importance of his glorifying God with his "body and with his spirit," as the little book read? How was Winter to tell? "By their fruits ye shall know them," read the book; and the fruits this Christian bore were: algebra, physiology, English history, and the like. Miss Force would have been dumbfounded over his conclusions; but really I do not know how he could have avoided them.

As for Miss Putnam, she also was a professing

Christian. Winter had sat near her in church one Sabbath, and had seen her accept the bread and wine with reverent face. Her life, carefully watched, bore certain unmistakable fruit. She was interested in her cow and her garden and her flowers; she was interested in his clothes—they were always clean and in order; in his breakfasts and dinners—they were always abundant and wholesome; she was interested in industry and in thrift, and commended him heartily for work which pleased her; she was even interested in a silent sort of way in his books. Did she not nightly furnish him with a large shaded lamp, and say not a word when he occasionally burned it until midnight? Was she also interested in his soul? “I will have nobody about me who does not go to church regularly on Sundays. I don’t believe in heathenism in a Christian land.” This was the utmost possible which could be construed into a “religious conversation” which she had ever held with him. Like the minister, she had talked about the cabbages and the potato-bug and the currant-worm and the rose-slug; these were his *duties*. Were the other things?

Remember he had no inner experience of his own from which to judge. He knew nothing about the earnest struggles which Miss Putnam had with her rugged nature to keep her patient with the hundred shortcomings and downright failures of her fellow men and women. He did not

hear her pray for strength to keep her from giving Deacon Trumble a "piece of her mind," nor for patience to endure her tenant's slowness about his payments as long as it ought to be endured. He knew nothing of Miss Force's honest desire to press the interests of her circle, the cause of education, the general advancement of the world in right ways, because she believed that all these things were for the glory of God. It was only with distinct facts, as they came before his vision, that he could deal. How was he to help his conclusions?

They were not that these two were hypocrites; they were simply that, in a sense of which the writer of the line never dreamed, "things are not what they seem." In other words, that the verses in the little book were capable of some other meaning than that which appeared on the surface. "This one thing I do," meant, somehow, "I do a thousand things, all of them of more importance than this one of which I seem to be talking."

Do you see the bewilderment of his mind? What was there for him to do but the thing he did do — push it all from him as a matter with which he had no present dealing? Let the people who had time, and were inclined that way, attend to such topics; for himself, he was otherwise employed.

So the busy springtime passed, and the summer was fairly upon them. Three weeks more and

school would close for the long vacation, and Miss Force would go to her Eastern home.

"But I have promised to come back," she said to Miss Putnam as the two sat over their early breakfast in the cool of the summer morning. "I was in great doubt about it, because of that other opening nearer home; and of course it would be pleasanter to be several hundred miles nearer mamma; though after all, as you say, it doesn't make very much difference after one is seated in the cars. But you will be amused over what finally decided me in favor of this place. Oh! of course, I would rather a hundred times be here than to go among strangers; and you know how I would miss you, and my pretty room and everything. But the thought which finally weighed down the scales had to do with your Winter. I am so interested in that boy. You can't think how anxious I am to see him get an education. I believe he is going to do it; something more, you know, than a mere knowledge of rudiments. He has it in him, and it would be such a curious triumph of our reading circle; for, though to many, the road would seem circuitous, the circle has really been the centre of action."

"He is certainly busy enough about his books to accomplish something; and it hasn't spoiled him for work, either," Miss Putnam assented cordially; "I was afraid at first that you would give him notions about being 'destined for a higher

sphere,' or some of that kind of stuff, but he has been just as faithful as before ; and I don't know but he has been sharper about some things ; it wouldn't be easy for anybody to cheat him out of a half-cent, I know."

"I mean to help him," said Miss Force, energetically ; "when I come back in the fall I shall bring a trunk full of books which will be especially suited to his needs ; I shall get a friend of mine to help me select some works on anatomy from papa's library ; it seems strange that his tastes are developing in that line, for it is the exact line in which I can help him ; with books, and such books are expensive, you know. I think it must be more than a passing fancy, for I never had a scholar who made anything like the progress which he has in the study of physiology ; the truth is, that lending him books is about the only way in which I can help him now in that line ; he is getting beyond my depth ; and I was pretty well read for a girl who had no natural tastes in those directions ; I think papa was always a little sorry I had not ; he tried to cultivate some in me. However, Winter needs help in other directions ; a doctor has need to know more than medicine."

"You don't suppose he ever expects to make a doctor of himself !" exclaimed Miss Putnam, not a little startled. To have her "tramp" develop in this way was so entirely out of the line of conventionality ; so unlike her old-fashioned knowledge

of these things, so many years in common school, so many in the "academy," so many in college, so many attending lectures, that she was somewhat in doubt whether to be pleased, or to think Miss Force a harmful visionary.

"Why not?" returned that young lady, coolly, helping herself to another dish of strawberries. "Aren't these berries delicious? Winter succeeds with strawberries, doesn't he? I shall not be amazed if he develops into a thoroughly well-educated doctor in time, though I do not think he has an idea of it as yet. He has not fully awakened to the fact that a young man with brains and determination can do almost anything he wishes, in this country. He is certainly bewitched with all the studies which tend in a medical direction; and I believe in his cultivating the taste, and seeing what will come of it. To that end I mean to help him."

Miss Putnam stirred her coffee thoughtfully.

"I mean to help him myself a little," she said, with the slowness of speech which indicates deliberate decision; "I have some things in mind; though if you are right, perhaps they are not the proper things for him; I thought maybe when I was through with the old place—Don doesn't need it, nor want it—not that I could ever let the old place go entirely out of the family; it belongs to the name, and I hope Don will never let go of it; but I thought if Win made a farmer of himself,

perhaps it might be managed that—it is a pity you are not going to be here this summer while Don is at home; you and he might have some pretty good times together; maybe you might be able to awaken his interest in your protégé."

There was a wickedly mischievous look in Miss Putnam's gray eyes as she got off these innocent sentences. The blood glowed on the younger lady's cheek, but she answered promptly enough:

"Of course I wouldn't miss being at home with mamma for anything else in the world; but I have no fears about your being able to interest Mr. Bradley in Winter; I have never known a young man more interested in struggling boys than he."

"Don is interested in everything good," said Miss Putnam, a beautiful, tender light coming into her eyes as she thought of her idol; "well, my plan is to talk things over with Don and see how they could be arranged so that Winter might be a fixture on the place so long as he wanted to be. I thought of putting something about it into my will. I made my will quite a little while ago, and left him a curious kind of a present," and again the laughing look came into her eyes; "but I have thought of changing it a little if Don approved."

"Mr. Bradley will be sure to approve of whatever unselfish, helpful thoughts you have," said Miss Force, heartily; "I'm so glad that my boy Win has such a good strong friend as you. I mean to start him in several other directions during

these three weeks ; give him enough to work on all summer."

They left the table with that and went their busy ways, still full of their kindly plans for the boy who steadily hoed in the large vegetable garden ; but who no longer whistled while he hoed, for the reason that he had not time for whistling ; he was at that moment mastering one of the conjugations of a Latin verb.

Miss Force stopped as she passed the gate on her way to school and spoke some pleasant words and went away still thinking of him.

"That young fellow ought to be a Christian," this was her thought ; "of course all people ought to be ; but he will have influence in the world, I believe ; he ought to be won for Christ before he goes any farther ; I wish I knew how to approach him on such a subject. To-night I mean to try to have a real earnest talk with him."

Two hours later Winter brought from the office one of those yellow-covered letters which are sure to strike terror to the hearts of people unused to receiving them ; he halted at the side door where Miss Putnam stood, only long enough to say :

"Here is the meat, and I have a telegram for Miss Force. I thought I would drive to the schoolhouse with it. It may be something which she ought to know right away."

"Of course," said Miss Putnam ; "dear me, I hope the poor child has no bad news."

But Winter could not reply, for the reason that he and the fat pony were already far down the road leading to the Fremont Street School.

It was short and cruelly explicit, as well as cruelly lacking in details, as telegrams always are.

“Mother is very sick; come immediately.”

It was Winter who remembered that an East-bound train would be due in an hour; it was he who gathered the poor young teacher's books, remembering the Bible in her desk and the note-book under a pile of papers; it was he who gave brief explanation to the principal at the door, while some of the older girls helped their teacher with her sack and hat. It was he who, a half-hour later, managed to get the big trunk down the wide old staircase, he hardly knew how; it was he who bought the ticket and checked the trunk, after driving with utmost speed and absolute silence through the long sunny street. From the first moment of his arrival at the schoolroom door he had been alert, efficient, sympathetic, silent.

On the platform Miss Force stopped and held out her hand.

“Good-by!” she said; “you have been as good as gold; and as thoughtful as though you had taken care of people all your life. I shall not forget you.”

“I'll never forget her,” he said, in grim, tearless sorrow, as he let the pony walk slowly toward home to atone for her unwonted speed; she had

not waddled so fast in years as she had that morning.

"She has been a good friend to me ; I don't know what I'm to do ; I don't believe she will come back ; somehow, it seems as though she wouldn't. I was going to ask her about that Latin rule this very evening ; well, there's one thing, she expects me to conquer that Latin grammar this summer, and I mean to do it."

CHAPTER XVI.

"ORDERS TO MOVE."

HER mother is dead, Win," said Miss Putnam, appearing at the kitchen door, letter in hand, just as Winter was coming with a basket of kindlings.

He stopped short in the path.

"Dead!" he repeated, in awe-stricken tones, which also conveyed a sense of dismay.

"Yes, poor thing; she only just arrived in time; she says if you hadn't made her catch that train she would have been too late; she sends you her love and thanks; she remembers everything, poor young creature," and Miss Putnam lifted the corner of her white apron and wiped a great tear out of her eye.

"She isn't coming back, Win. She says her young sister is so lonesome now, she will have to stay near her. I felt in my bones that she wouldn't come back that day she went off; she says you can keep the books she lent you, and welcome; and she is sorry she can't be here to lend you any more; she set great store by you,

Win. You ought to make something of yourself just to please her."

"She was very good to me," said Winter, his voice a little husky, despite his effort at self-control, "and I haven't so many friends that I shall be likely to forget her."

"Well, as to that, you probably have more friends than you think for; most people have, who deserve them; I think something of you myself. I'm not a woman of many words, but I've got eyes, and I know you've been a good, faithful boy to me; I don't mean to forget it; I only hope you will be as faithful to yourself as you are to me. It isn't worth while to give all your mind to *books*, even, though I'm willing you should think as much of them as you want to; but it would be a pity to get ready for only one world, when the other is so near by.

"Here was this girl telling me only a few days before she went home how young-looking and healthy her mother was, and how she meant to have her live with her when she was a sweet old lady with white hair; and how she meant her to have every comfort in the world; and here she's gone! I only hope she was ready to go; that it is nothing *but* comfort for her now. It is worth while to think of that, I can tell you, my lad; and it isn't sensible to keep putting it off, either, for sometimes these orders to move come suddenly."

She darted in at that and closed the door, leav-

ing Winter standing, kindlings in hand. He was a good deal astonished. Miss Putnam had never spoken such words to him before ; he had never seen her so deeply moved. That she was thoroughly in earnest, was plain.

He thought a good deal about her words during the evening ; they pushed in between the Latin verbs and the problems in algebra, and insisted on being thought about ; somehow they fitted the little book in his pocket better than any words he had ever before heard Miss Putnam speak ; yet after all, they were thought about sentimentally rather than in a business-like way, such as their importance demanded. Miss Putnam had been kind to him, he reflected, had been a good friend ; and if he lived, he should repay her tenfold for all her kindness ; he was already beginning to have the feeling that the time would come when he could repay kindnesses in greatly increased measure. He decided again that he would stay on with her as long as he could, and make her garden more and more productive, and look after her interests in a hundred ways.

It was after nine o'clock when he saw Miss Putnam again. "Are you going to take those berries in to Judge Burnham's to-morrow?" she asked. To a curious observer it would have been interesting to note how frequently, of late, Miss Putnam began her remarks to Winter with an interrogation instead of a command.

"Yes'm," he answered promptly, "bright and early ; I shall have them picked and be off before the sun is up."

Still she lingered.

"Suppose you come into the house to sleep to-night," she said at last. "You might sleep in the little back room that Don used to have ; I feel dreadful lonesome, somehow. For the matter of that, you might sleep there every night ; might have it for your room ; it would be handier than where you are now."

"Very well, ma'am," said Winter respectfully. "I'll do just as you say." But his eyes danced a little ; the wood-house chamber was entirely comfortable ; but to be given Don's neat little room upstairs, only three doors away from Miss Force's old room, was certainly promotion ; and he liked it. Miss Putnam took the stove-handle and lifted the cover from the stove in an absent way, looked in, then fitted it to its place again ; the fire was neatly laid, ready for morning. "You don't forget anything, do you, Win ?" she said cordially. "What book are you at now ? Latin ? What do you expect to do with Latin ? It doesn't help about farming, and I think you are a born farmer, if there ever was one ; but Miss Force thinks," — and then she stopped.

"What does Miss Force think ?"

"Why, she has a notion that you may some day be a doctor ; but I think working in the nice,

sweet-smelling ground is a great deal better than poking over pills, and powders, and other disgusting things."

"Did Miss Force say that?" with a flash of keenest satisfaction in his eyes.

"Well, something of that kind; but I don't know as she would thank me for speaking of it; don't you ever read the Bible, young man? Haven't you got a Bible?"

There was a red glow on Winter's face now. "No, ma'am," he said, speaking low, "I never owned a Bible."

"Well, you ought to; it is heathenish not to have a Bible of one's own, and not to read it, too; here, I'll give you one."

She disappeared through the dining-room door, but returned in so short a time that she must certainly have had the Bible selected and in waiting. It was a small plain one, neatly bound. "There," she said, "I hope you'll keep it and read it; it is worth a good deal more than Latin, though I've nothing to say against that. Well, you come upstairs to sleep to-night. I'm so kind of lonesome without Miss Force, and so sorry for her, poor young thing, that it makes me feel pokerish. Good-night!"

"Good-night!" said Winter gently, almost tremulously. He was a good deal touched; she had never told him good-night before.

The first red and gold heralds of the sun were

flushing the east next morning when the pony waddled toward town carrying a basket of wonderful strawberries covered with their own leaves on which the dew yet sparkled. After delivering them, there were errands to do in town ; a note to leave at the doctor's, and an answer to wait for, and various other matters which detained him until the sun was fully two hours high, when the pony drew up before her own stable ; then something unusual in the appearance of the generally quiet house made Winter wait only to secure her from going, wagon and all, into her stall, before he ran up the side steps, and entered the dining-room. Beside the door lay a basket overturned, from which potatoes and onions had rolled ; it was part of the confusion which had made Winter sure that something unusual had happened. The housekeeper from next door stood in the room, pitcher in hand, a half-dazed look on her face.

"That is my basket," she said, apologetically, to Winter ; "I dropped it in my hurry and fright ; I wanted to get to her as quick as I could, but it did no good."

"What is the matter?" asked Winter, his face paling ; "where is Miss Putnam?"

"Oh ! you haven't heard ? Of course you haven't ; you've just got home. Why, she's gone ! Poor fellow ! Your best friend. Don't faint, young man, for pity's sake ; there's confusion enough in this house ; not but what I'm sorry for you."

"What do you mean?" asked Winter; "I don't understand;" but he sat down suddenly in the old-fashioned arm-chair and felt curiously dizzy, and as though the foundations of the earth were slipping away.

"Why, I ran over here with my basket to see if she could let me have a little parsley; this door stood open, and I came to it, and she sat there in that chair, looking white. 'What's the matter?' I asked her; 'have you been frightened, or anything?' for she looked deathly white. She shook her head, and then she said, sort of gasping the words out, 'I'm taken suddenly sick; can you help me to bed?' I dropped my basket and ran to her, or she would have fallen out of the chair; Deacon Trumble was just passing, and I called to him, and between us we got her into bed, and he ran for the doctor; and I put cold water on her head and hot water on her hands, but it did no good; she was gone before the doctor came; heart disease, he said; she only opened her eyes once, and then she said, 'Tell Win not to;' but, you poor fellow, she couldn't finish it; and what she wanted you not to do, I don't know; maybe you do."

In such a sudden, unnatural, and yet, in a certain sense, natural and simple way, had Miss Putnam's "orders" come, and without delay or word of direction to those left behind she had gone!

Stranded once more. Shelter, and friendliness,

and a sense of "belonging" that had grown upon him, especially of late, swept away. This time he had not run away from his appointed home ; it had run away from him. Through all the years which followed Winter carried always a vivid recollection of the minutest events of those days, immediately preceding the funeral of Miss Putnam. He was at home, and yet not at home ; he had the care of everything in and about the house ; yet had no authority and no control over a penny's worth. All the people who came and went with neighborly offers knew him, were sorry for him, but were nothing to him. He got himself something to eat from the well-stocked larder with which he was so familiar, and he slept in the little room upstairs, of which he had taken such proud possession that first night. A neighbor, more commonplace and more thoughtful than the others, had invited him to her house to sleep ; but he had quietly declined ; he had a feeling of which he would not have spoken for the world, that Miss Putnam, in her silent state in the front parlor, would feel less lonely if he stayed in the house.

Don, the cherished nephew, came in haste, and was overwhelmed with grief and self-pity that he could not have come before. He, too, was kind to Win.

"She often mentioned you in her letters," he said heartily, "and told me you were faithful in every way. Poor, lonely auntie ! I am glad she

had a faithful young helper with her to the last." The great tears were in his handsome eyes while he spoke; he was sorry for Win, but of course infinitely more sorry for himself.

He went away to dinner to the home of old acquaintances, and accepted their invitation for the night; and assented earnestly when they said his aunt's boy was "very much depressed, poor fellow! he was deeply attached to Miss Putnam, as well he might have been."

And it was all over at last; the burial, the looking at, and locking up of books and papers and packages; done in nervous haste on the part of the nephew, both because he must needs be in haste, and because it was misery to him to go through it all; he was glad of Winter's swift, silent, practical help.

When Miss Putnam's lawyer came, and the solitary relative went with him to the library, Winter wandered in the garden, aimlessly, and waited. He was to take the nephew to the train in the very early morning.

"I *must* go," the young man had said; "whatever other business there is to attend to, her lawyer must do; I can not delay an hour longer; it is as much as my place in the college is worth to have been away so long. What are you going to do, Win?"

"I don't know," said Winter, apathetically.

He might almost as well have added, "I don't

care." His manner said it for him. This young man who had been living so fast for the last few months, felt stunned and thrown backward.

The college student regarded him curiously.

"Well," he said, after a moment's silence, "you will have no difficulty in securing another place, I should say ; almost any one about here in need of help would be glad to get you ; they all tell me how faithful you have been to my aunt. If you like, I " —

And then Winter had interrupted him hastily.

"I shall not stay about here," he said ; "I want to go away."

"Do you ? I should have thought it better for you to stay where you were known. However" —

And then he had been called. Two hours later he came out from the library, and went straight to the back yard where Winter was at work putting everything in order for the night. There were traces of deep emotion on his face.

"Win," he said, "I've been reading the will ; I haven't looked at it before ; I knew the most of it, for she told me long ago, but I could not want to touch it, somehow ; at last I have, and your name is in it."

"Mine !" said Winter, in undoubted astonishment. Why should his name appear there ? Miss Putnam had paid him fair wages, and been never a day behind in her payments. The wages had not been large ; not so large, she told herself, as

the boy deserved; and she had added to herself that she would make up for that; but she had not done so, not in the way she meant; she had waited just one day too long. But none of these things did Winter know.

"Yes," the nephew said, "your name was there; 'my young friend, Winter Kelland, for whom I have great esteem;' these are the words, and they are worth a good deal; my aunt always said exactly what she meant. She left you one hundred dollars in money."

The boy caught his breath hard. A million dollars left to some boys would not have astonished them more than this hundred did him. Who would have supposed that anybody would ever leave him money?

"And the little spring wagon and the pony," he added.

"For my own?" There was a curious quiver in Winter's voice.

"For your own, to do with as you will. She adds that she knows you will take care of her. She thought a great deal of the pony."

"Yes," said Winter.

He could not have added another word just then; there was a strange lump in his throat which took him curiously back to the day when his father was buried. He turned abruptly from the nephew, walked toward the neat little stable which he had just closed and locked, fitted the key in the lock,

drew the door back a little way, entered and pushed it to again, then going over to where the fat pony contentedly munched her oats, put both arms around the animal's neck, leaned his head against her and let the slow tears drop down on her gray mane.

CHAPTER XVII.

HAPPENINGS.

SIX weeks afterward, in the breathless stillness of a summer morning, Winter Kelland stood near the gate of the vegetable garden, answering last questions for a man who surveyed the fair scene with evident satisfaction ; six busy weeks, during which Winter had hoed and raked, and watered and weeded and watched the familiar grounds that had been home to him for years ; the appointed care-taker, until the place could be judiciously rented. The hurried nephew had gone his way ; Winter had received his directions, and answered his letters, and interviewed the man to whom he sent him, and done with patient, conscientious care the hundred little things that needed doing. A heavy trust certainly for one whom everybody still called a boy. The shrewd nephew had made answer to some who tried to advise him against trusting too much in a boy and a stranger, —

“My aunt was the most successful woman of business I have ever known, and she has written

me repeatedly that she would not be afraid to trust 'her Win' with all she had ; where *she* could trust, I can."

And Winter had been faithful, but with this summer morning his responsibility ended. The place had been rented, and the new care-taker was on hand looking over his prospects.

The little wagon with the fat pony harnessed to it stood before the door as they had stood so many hundred times in the past ; but if the pony had known it, she might have felt sad, for she was destined never to stand there again. A neat valise, quite new, was slipped under the seat ; it had been bought for the occasion, and was carefully packed with all the clothing Winter had ; also in the back part of the wagon was a small box filled with books. Winter stood, as I said, near the gate, answering last questions preparatory to a final start.

"Yes, sir, those are the 'Early Rose.' " "No, sir, we are the only ones within five miles of here who have that variety. " "Yes, sir, they are the crook-neck squash, the best to be had in the market ; yes, that ground where they are planted proved to be the best spot for them ; I had to enrich the soil considerably, but it is first-class now."

"I wish you had decided to stay with me," said the man regretfully, as he glanced at the tall form ready for a journey, and noted the quickness of his replies : "I should have thought you would

rather stay at the old place than anywhere else, and I'd have done well by you."

A flush spread over Winter's face. "Thank you," he said; "I like the old place, and I shall never forget it, but I could not see my way clear to staying. I hope it will do well by you, and I think it will; that sweet corn on the right, is the earliest by a week, of any in the neighborhood, and it is a very choice variety. Miss Putnam intended to supply her friends out of that this fall." The sentence ended with a sigh, and the young man turned to go.

"Well, sir, if there's nothing more, I will bid you good-morning; the sun is getting pretty well started."

"Good-by!" said the man, still regretfully. "I wish you success, and hope you won't have occasion to be sorry that you deserted the ground you seem to understand so well."

Then Winter went for the last time out of the neatly-painted gate, climbed into the little wagon, gathered the reins as he had done so many times for a trip to depot or market, turned in the seat so as to get one long, steady look at the old-fashioned house until the corner was reached and turned, then he gave the pony a hint, and she broke into a smart trot and they were off.

"I'm a tramp again," he said, half-aloud, and with a curious laugh, which might almost have been a sob, instead; "I wonder if they call fellows

who start out with their own team, by the same encouraging name?"

He carefully surveyed himself from head to foot, that amused smile still on his face, and yet behind it a hint of sadness. There was certainly a marked difference between his present appearance and the way he looked the night he first presented himself at Miss Putnam's door. "I've been making myself necessary to somebody," he murmured, the smile growing more defined; how distinctly he remembered the well-dressed boy who had sat astride the fence and delivered him that lecture; he felt in his breast-pocket for the book two inches square; he always carried it there in token of the one who had spoken some encouraging words; he thought of his Bible, carefully wrapped in paper, in his new valise; he should always keep that Bible; he was glad Miss Putnam gave it to him; occasionally he would read in it, because she asked him to do so that last night. An hour of steady driving and he came to a point where two roads met. Which to take, was the question. He had no idea how to decide. "I'm a tramp," he said again, laughing. "Pony, which road do you think we would better take? Does it make any difference to tramps? I suppose it will make a difference always what I do this minute," and his face grew grave with the solemnity of the truth whose faint shadow he grasped. "But how is one ever to know? Perhaps I ought to have inquired

about some things, but I did not know anybody who would either know or care. I wonder if my friend in here could give any advice? He fumbled for the small book, half ashamed of himself for his queer, unusual mood. What did he know about the book? And how could it advise him? Yet he opened it at random, and read the words, "If Thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence." He shut the book quickly and hid it away. What a strange verse to appear to him just now. He had not asked this thing, nor any other thing of the Lord. If he had defined his religious impressions, so far as he had any, they would have been that the Lord cared nothing about him; did not take notice of his daily life. Yet here was somebody—he had no idea who—whose convictions on this subject were so strong that he actually dared to pray, "If Thy presence be not with me, don't let me go this way." Would it not be a comfort to have so powerful and helpful a Friend as that? One who would assuredly direct in every step? The thought for a moment touched the heart of this lonely young man; the next, I grieve to tell you, a mocking smile hovered on his lips. "It is not true," he said firmly. "I don't mean that it never was so, but such times are gone. If the people of to-day are led, so that they know just what to do and where to go, they have the most shilly-shally way of showing it that could be imagined. I don't believe *a word of it*.

They do their own planning and contriving, and trust to common sense or luck, just as I must do. Pony, we'll go this way." And he turned sharply into the right-hand road and trotted on. Why did he decide for this? He could not have told; had he been questioned, he would have said that he just "happened" to do so.

The years to come, with their solemn teachings, must pass over him before he will understand that there are no "happenings" to human lives.

Three days afterward, in accordance with this theory of his, he happened to tie his horse before a certain restaurant in a large town, or rather city, which he had just reached, and going in for dinner, "happened" to take a seat at table where two men were eating and talking.

"If we could get Dr. Decker," one was saying, "he would be the man to give us what we need; he is by far the most scholarly physician we have in this part of the world, and is a fine speaker withal, and has any amount of apparatus at command for illustration; but he is as much out of our reach as is the man in the moon."

"Why?"

"Oh! too busy; he is the star doctor of all this region of country; people who for convenience or economy employ some one else at first, if they get *very* sick send for him; and he is the consulting physician in all critical cases, as far as they can reach him."

“How did he get so famous?”

“Well,” laughing a little, “despite the carping speeches often made about famous people, I really think he earned his fame. ‘Success succeeds’ is a cranky speech of somebody’s, I don’t remember whose, and there is a great deal of underlying truth in it. He is well educated and smart, and has had unusual advantages, and was thrown, providentially, he would say, among a class of diseases which had baffled some of the wisest, and he became deeply interested and studied them, and had success. Why shouldn’t he be famous? But just because he is so famous there is no hope of our getting him to lecture to our circle; we must be content with some lesser light. What would you think of young Dr. Masters? He used to be one of Decker’s students.”

“I should think it might be well to get Decker’s opinion of him as a speaker; he might not be too busy for that. Where’s his office?”

“Whose, Decker’s? Why, on Duane Street, of course; the most fashionable portion of the city; 268 Duane Street; that isn’t a bad idea of yours; suppose we drive up there and call on him right away.”

“Suppose we do,” said Winter Kelland, rising at the same moment with the others; but *his* remark was made to himself. While paying his bill he asked for explicit directions how to reach 268 Duane Street, then drove leisurely in an opposite

direction ; his plan was to give the strangers a chance to make their inquiries before he pressed his. It was therefore a half-hour later when his gray pony halted before a handsome building which bore on side and end the name he had searched for — "Norman Decker, M. D." However, it chanced that the doctor's office hours had not been quite over when his other callers arrived, and they had to wait ; the consequence was, Winter could see through the open door that they were at this moment conversing with Dr. Decker.

"He is a younger man than I supposed," our young tramp said, as he tied his pony and interviewed the bell-boy.

"Can I wait here and see Dr. Decker when he is alone?"

"It is after office hours," said the bell-boy, significantly.

"I suppose so ; but I do not want to see him as a patient ; it is on business, important business."

Considering which the reluctant bell-boy consented to his staying. Bits of the talk floated out to him through the half-open door.

"O, yes," the doctor was saying, "I am interested in that reading circle ; I spent a few days at its fountain-head last summer, and would have gone again this season if I could have gotten away ; I think that entire scheme is worthy of a genius ; it touches me in a very vulnerable spot ; I have always been deeply interested in boys who

were struggling toward an education, trying to overcome the disadvantages of not having begun early enough."

"I'm glad to hear that," interpolated the listener in the waiting-room. "It helps a great many of that class of workers, as well as furnishing a pleasant method of review for scholars. I'm really *very* deeply interested in it, and nothing would give me greater pleasure than to serve you if I could; but I am simply overwhelmed with work and care."

It was very soon after this that the gentlemen were bowed out; the doctor attended them to the outer door of the waiting-room, and, returning, gave a questioning glance toward Winter. This was evidently his opportunity; he made quick use of it:

"I called, sir, to see if you did not want to hire a boy."

"What sort of a boy?" said the doctor, with the quick air of one accustomed to decide things in haste.

"The sort of boy that I am."

There might have been the faintest gleam of a smile in Winter's eyes, but he did not mean there should be.

"What sort of a boy are you?"

"I'm eighteen years old; have worked at farming for three years; I understand something about potatoes and cabbages and weeds; I can take care of horses and drive them, and I can try to do any-

thing I'm set at ; I've a spring wagon and pony of my own out there at the door."

"Upon my word!" said the doctor; "that is an unusual addition to a boy. May I inquire where you got them, and why you decided to give me a call, since I am not a farmer, and have very little knowledge of potatoes and cabbage-heads—the kind you mean, at least—and what your father and mother think of all this?"

The words were poured out rapidly enough to have disconcerted a less self-assertive young man than Winter, but his answers were as prompt as the questions had been.

"The horse and wagon were left to me by the woman with whom I have lived for three years; she died nearly two months ago; she was Miss Hester Putnam, of Carroll County; I came here because I heard you were the greatest doctor in this part of the world, and I want to get a chance to study medicine; my mother died soon after I was born, and my father ten years ago. I haven't anybody in the world who cares what I do."

Despite his rapid business tone, there was a little quiver in the voice just here.

"That is an extraordinary story, young man. How do I know that a word of it is true?"

"You don't, of course; but if you cared whether it was or not, you might write to this place; it isn't so far away. Dr. Holden is the minister, and Dr. Symonds the doctor who used to come to

our house ; and the grocers and postmaster and the station agent knew me ; I could give you their names. Everybody knew the old Putnam place where I lived."

"How do you know you want to study medicine?"

"I found it out by reading a book on physiology. 'Human Physiology' was the name of it ; a lady, a teacher, lent it to me ; she said it was in their reading course. I read and studied it a great deal, and I have known ever since that medicine is what I must study."

"That circle again," said Dr. Decker, with a sudden lighting up of a pair of very expressive eyes. "Well, as I said, this is somewhat out of the usual line ; I do not know that I want a boy ; but my children wouldn't object to the pony, I fancy. She looks like a gentle little beast. Haven't you a sister, young man?"

Winter shook his head.

"I never had a sister or brother."

"I had a sister," said Dr. Decker, emphatically ; "the grandest woman this world owns. So you *happened* on a physiology? My sister borrowed one for me, and made endless cookies to earn enough to buy the next book." A dreamy smile was spreading over his face as he went back into his past. "Yes, James, I'm coming." This, in answer to his coachman's inquiring look, and the business-like air of the hurried doctor was back

again. "I haven't another inch of time ; they are dangerous books, these physiologies ; that first one of mine has kept me on the rush night and day ever since. You may go around to Widow Tryon's, on Bond Street, Mrs. Mary Tryon, 14 Bond Street, and ask her to put you up for the night ; leave your horse here, and my man will take care of him to-night ; and at seven o'clock *sharp* you may come here, and I will talk with you. All this if you choose to run the risk. I'll be responsible for your supper and bed to-night, but I may not do another thing."

"Thank you," said Winter, rising ; "I shall be sure to come at seven o'clock." The doctor had already drawn on his gloves and now looked about for his hat. Winter sprang for it, and as he did so, laid his hand on a medical newspaper which had been tossed carelessly on the table. "Could I borrow this until evening ?"

A curious smile hovered over the doctor's face ; his quick eye had caught a glimpse of the heading which had evidently attracted this boy in search of a place. "The Latest Theories on the Management of Typhoid Fevers" was the pretentious title.

"O, yes!" he said, "borrow it and welcome."

And as the doctor stepped into his carriage he muttered : "He evidently has the disease ; I believe I'll try if a few doses will cure him."

CHAPTER XVIII.

DIFFERING WORLDS.

HOW did he “happen” to get a chance to work for Doctor Norman Decker? This was Winter Kelland’s way of putting it, for years. Nevertheless, it gave him great satisfaction, as the days and months went by, that such a “happening” had come to him. Not that he was wonderfully promoted in any way. His life was quite as busy and almost as isolated from people as it had been in Miss Putnam’s quiet home. Dr. Decker found plenty of work for him — hoeing, weeding, watering horses, answering night-bells, driving the doctor’s children to and from school on stormy days, driving the doctor occasionally in his own little spring wagon when it suited that gentleman’s fancy; oh! there was enough to do. Certainly Dr. Decker, if he was a very busy man himself, knew how to keep other people busy. Yet, with all his work and care, Winter had never found more time for study than here; there were long, quiet evenings when he relieved the bell-boy from service, and was only interrupted by an occasional ring of the bell from

those so urgent or so ignorant that they could ignore the doctor's office hours, to which he held himself with strictest care. There were mornings, quite often, when he was summoned from the garden or the table, with the direction to make himself presentable and sit in the receiving-room while the young student in usual attendance went elsewhere ; at these times the doctor himself grew into the habit of striding over to the library and selecting from its solemn crowds the special book which it would be well for Winter to read next. Over such books Winter studied as he had never studied before, and the red which dyed face and neck at first, when the doctor would suddenly ask him three or four terse questions about what he had been reading, came less readily, as he grew accustomed to the attention ; he even ventured on an occasional question himself, and was answered fully and kindly. These were growing days to Winter Kelland. Mrs. Mary Tryon, 14 Bond Street, had been quite willing to accept as a boarder any one whom Dr. Decker chose to send ; and Winter was installed in a back attic room of her tall and narrow city house ; not so cheerful a room as that which he had occupied for certain well-remembered nights in Miss Putnam's home, but quite good enough for Winter's needs ; he spent less and less time in it, as the days went by, and he was more and more frequently summoned to the waiting-room to take the bell-boy's place. Indeed the bell-

boy grew to looking upon him as a special providence, and smiled broadly whenever he was relieved an hour earlier than usual and sent home. Certainly no one could have been more glad to see him relieved than was Winter ; so on all sides was satisfaction. No, not quite ; socially, he was still alone. He studied over it sometimes ; looked about him longingly for companionship, wondered if he should ever have a friend. Almost every one he knew seemed to have some one with whom to be on very familiar terms ; always excepting himself. He lived in two worlds and neither of them fitted him, and they were both quite unlike the worlds in which he had lived before.

Mrs. Tryon's table was filled to the verge of crowding with young men ; gay, stylishly dressed young men ; at least Winter thought during those days that they were stylishly dressed. They wore immaculate paper collars and spotless shirt fronts, with now and then a diamond, which, being made of paste, certainly cost very little, but Winter did not know this. Others of them wore very gay scarfs, tied bewilderingly, and poked a rosebud occasionally into their buttonholes, and combed their hair in a fashion which he could not ; and wore thinner boots than he could afford, and did a hundred other little things to mark their position as in another world than his. They were very busy during the day measuring lawns and calicoes, and sorting thread and buttons and ribbons, or

running hither and thither on errands for great men, who thought of them only as animated machines to do their bidding; but a little of the greatness in which they spent their days seemed reflected on them; they talked glibly about this and that "style," about a "fine turnout," about pretty faces, about the merits of such an opera, even about public speakers, as to whether they were "the real thing" or not. On all these topics Winter was dumb; they belonged to that other world of which he was not. He used occasionally to wonder why it was that none of these young men ever mentioned a book or a study; it might be just possible that in doing so they would name one at the covers of which he had looked, when he stood before the great library, but they never entered this field, and Winter did not for a moment think of leading the way. So they ate their hurried breakfasts together, and, more leisurely, their late dinners, and chatted merrily, and nodded to Winter, some of them, when they came in, and occasionally asked him to pass the bread or help them to butter; and for the rest, ignored his existence. "Who is he?" they had asked of one another when he first came, and the answers had been various:

"He is Dr. Decker's new bell-boy, I think. I saw him opening the door for the Stuart carriage."

"I didn't know we had bell-boys at our table."

This from a pale-faced man who wore a waxed mustache and sold buttons and braid at the "no-tion" counter of a large store.

"Oh! he isn't; he is the stable-boy, I think; I saw him at work among the horses only yesterday." This from a mischievous fellow who shouted messages all day through a down-town telephone, and who liked to tease the owner of the waxed mustache.

"Upon my word," said that person, curling his mustache with the aid of his upper lip, "I think we might at least have separate tables. Let's inquire into things."

Ten mintues later gave them opportunity. Mrs. Tryon herself, tall, pale, weary-eyed, in a collarless dress, came to serve the pie. She, being interviewed, responded with dignity. He was a student at Dr. Decker's office; she did not know, she was sure, but he might answer bells and feed horses and do a hundred other things; she had not asked, and she did not propose to; she had received, on the second morning after his coming, a note from Dr. Decker, written by his own hand, in which he said that young Kelland was a new student whom he hoped she would try to make comfortable, as he was especially interested in him. And she meant to try to the best of her abilities.

Nothing more was to be said. If Dr. Decker vouched for the stranger's position, who could make any remark? Mrs. Tryon's closed lips and

keen eyes asked this question, and no one replied. So they nodded to him, those of them who did not forget it, and went on with their gay talk as though he had not been there. The other world was in Dr. Decker's office. Learned gentlemen, physicians, high in honor, came there to discuss "cases" with him; little physicians who were keen-brained and eager, and on the road to higher positions, came there to ask advice. Winter was often present at these interviews; in the next room, it is true, in the character of the bell-boy; but having ears, he heard, and pondered; he felt in his soul that he could be, if he had a chance, on the lower steps of the flight which led to this world; but as yet he must not even bow to the men who composed it. All the more, their talk made him sure that he did not belong, and would not be likely ever to belong, to the world which he met at Mrs. Tryon's table.

In the course of time he found what he thought at first was a piece of still another world; found it in Mrs. Tryon's store-room whither he went to carry a message from the doctor. She was mixing bread; you have surmised long before this that her house was by no means among the heights in the world of boarding-houses, and this weary household drudge had to turn cook or laundress, or table waiter, as the needs of the hour demanded. She was, therefore, mixing bread, and Winter knew it would be bread that was a trifle sour, and under-

done, and in many respects unlike the sweet loaves which Miss Putnam used to turn out ; but the thing which astonished him was an open book, pinned open with a fork, and bespattered with water and besprinkled with flour ; he was so astonished that he stopped in the middle of his sentence and stared at it.

Mrs. Tryon's sallow cheek flushed, and she laughed a slight, embarrassed laugh :

" You're almost scared to see a book, aren't you ? Well, I don't wonder ; but the fact is, I have so little time, I thought I'd pin it open before me and see if I couldn't fix them names while I was kneading bread ; but it is getting all flour, and I declare if there ain't a spot of lard on it ! I dunno but I'll have to give it up."

" What are you reading ? " Winter asked cordially, the sight of the open book making him feel more at home with her than he ever had before.

" Well, I wasn't exactly reading ; I was running over the names and events. You see I was foolish enough to join a reading circle when I lived in the country. We only moved into town a year ago, and I kind of hated to give it up, though I've no time for reading now ; but I keep sticking to the thing, thinking every day I won't. I miss the circle dreadfully ; we had good times in it."

Here was a reading circle where it would have been least suspected ; Winter concluded there were more people at work in this world than he knew of.

“Do you enjoy books of that kind?” he asked, glancing at the title of the one transfixed by the fork.

“Well, as to that, some of them I enjoyed and some I didn’t. A good many of them seemed most dreadful dry to me, and do yet ; I get so tired, you know, trotting around this house from morning till night waiting on people. I hate keeping boarders anyway ; I’d rather *starve* a little at a time each week than to live on the best of the land by keeping boarders ; but in spite of their dryness I get something from them. I hadn’t many chances when I was young ; that is why some things seem so dull to me — all new and strange, when they are nothing but a b c to people with educations ; but the dull ones even, when you master ’em, give you a kind of pleasure. When I was coming here on the cars, I had something happen to me which explains what I mean ; four people sat together, had one seat turned, you know ; first-class people — the class that isn’t made out of mustaches and frizzes : I mean the *real thing*. They were talking about a writer, an Englishman, and arguing as to just when he wrote a certain book, and just what was happening about the same time. There was a difference of opinion ; one thought one way and one another, and there was something of interest to themselves which turned on the decision, and none of ’em was right ; I had been interested listening, and before I thought, I spoke up and said : ‘It

was so and so.' Half-way folks would have thought I was intruding, and would have curled up their lips at me, but these weren't that kind; they thanked me as pleasant as could be, and kind of took me into the talk; I found out they belonged to the same reading circle that I did; one of the gentlemen was a great scholar, a professor, and he explained two or three things that had puzzled me; and altogether I had a good time; I felt for a little while as though I was somebody who had a thought occasionally besides what she could get for breakfast, and how she should manage the next quarter's rent. Yes, I like the books, even when they are dull; they get me out of myself."

"And are you reading all alone?" Winter asked, as he watched the floury mass being gradually reduced to order, and felt a deeper respect for the molder than he would have imagined possible a short time before.

"O, no! there are three of us. You know Aunt Charlotte? She is reading with us; she reads aloud, while I mend tablecloths and pillow-slips; some of the boarders' heads are very hard on pillow-slips; I'm sure I don't know why; it can't be brains that wear them out."

"You don't mean Miss Fletcher? Why, she is very old!"

"Yes, I do, mean Miss Fletcher; she's my aunt on my mother's side; yes, she is old, eighty-four last month, but she's as smart as a whip, and as

good a reader as you need want to hear. She enters into the spirit of some things a great deal better than I can ; she had a good education, Charlotte had, when she was young. Then there's my daughter Maria ; you haven't seen much of her ; she's dreadful busy, and I don't have her go into the dining-room much ; she hates it, and I just as soon she wouldn't, myself ; Maria's young, but you'd laugh to see her do her reading. She's a fancy knitter ; that is, she works at that evenings ; she clerks it in Westlake's fancy store ; and evenings she knits wristlets, and babies' socks, and sacks, and all sorts of pretty things. She says she is going to knit her way through the reading circle. Sometimes, to keep track of herself while Aunt Charlotte is reading, she has to keep up a kind of muttering like this : ' Knit one, over, narrow, knit three, slip one,' and all that sort of thing ; but she hears the reading, and remembers it better than any of us, and *she* doesn't think anything about it is dull. How I am running on to you ! I beg your pardon, I'm sure. It isn't often I talk, especially with the boarders."

" I am very much obliged to you," Winter said heartily ; " I like to hear about it very much ; I am interested in anything which has to do with books." And in his heart he thought that this world, composed of the bread-maker, and the eighty-four-year-old reader, and the young knitter, would be the one to which he would like to belong.

“Were there many members of the reading circle where you used to live?” he asked, anxious to hear more of her talk; he must wait until her hands were out of the flour before she could do the doctor’s bidding.

“Oh! I guess there were. It was just the life of the town. We had dreadful hard work getting it started; there was a Miss Perkins, a dressmaker, who got interested in it; she went from house to house sewing, and she told me that she cut and basted and fitted it into every dress she made for three months before she got the thing going, but it is live enough now. Fifty-four members, who meet every week, and they do have the nicest times! You see the place isn’t very large, and the people are poor, most of ’em; at least they aren’t very rich, though if I had the money that some of them have, I should think I was. But they earn their living, and there are very few of what I call ‘stuck-ups’ among them. A good many of us couldn’t afford to own the books so the circle bought them and lent them around, or we met in sections and appointed a reader, and listened and talked things over. Sometimes we had a regular party; refreshments, you know; nothing very grand, but a little cake and coffee, and a sandwich or two to make it seem social, and then we had an entertainment. Once it was ‘authors’ evening.’ The first thing we knew, a lady would walk into the room, take a seat in the centre and begin, ‘I

was born in London,' or Scotland maybe, wherever the place was; then she'd say, 'As a child I was noted for,' well, whatever she had planned to say; and she would go on in that way until somebody would get an inkling of who she was, and ask, 'Did your Christian name begin with a G'? In that way the questions would go on until we got her guessed out. She would prove to be some eminent writer, and for the rest of the evening she would have to personate that character as well as she could. Then a gentleman would come in and say he was born a hundred years ago maybe; it was great fun, as well as real improving; some of them we couldn't guess at all, but those we did guess — and for the matter of that, those we couldn't — we never forgot afterward. One night my Maria was Harriet Beecher Stowe, and for all she is such a modern writer, and people know so much about her, Maria succeeded in mystifying them so that it took twenty minutes to guess her out, and all her statements were correct, too. Did you ever hear anybody run on so in your life? I don't know what possesses me, but I am homesick for that reading circle, and that's a fact. Well, this bread is ready to leave, and now I'll tend to the doctor's orders right away."

CHAPTER XIX.

SEEKING STEPPING-STONES.

FROM the date of that conversation, Winter found within himself a growing longing for society — the sort which, as Mrs. Tryon said, was “real,” and which had to do with reading circles. He came to the conclusion that these latter institutions were much more common than he had supposed. He wondered much whether one could not be found which would admit him within its charmed ring. According to Mrs. Tryon, they could not be exclusive. He even meditated asking admittance to that one of three members: the reader, the knitter and the pillow-slip mender; but he reflected that that indeed might be embarrassingly exclusive; the three women might have good reason for objecting to the constant presence of one young man; so he abandoned this, and kept eyes and ears open in search of something more in accord with his present position. Occasionally he tried, with a curious smile on his face, to define his position. He ate no more of the “leavings” in Mrs. Josiah Griggs’ kitchen, so

much was certain; neither was he served with wholesome and appetizing food at Miss Putnam's shining kitchen table; at Mrs. Tryon's he occupied a seat at the first table, and had a napkin of decent size and a fork with some of the silver plating still left on it. By so much he had advanced. As for his Sundays, he still went to church with more or less regularity; but the habit of slipping a small book of some sort into his pocket for study while there, had grown upon him to such a degree that he often found himself foraging in the doctor's library for one of suitable size. His position behind one of the pillars in a seat which the doctor had rented for his "students," furthered this habit, and many an abstruse treatise on disease had he mastered, while the earnest preacher was struggling to gain his attention long enough to press the claims of the Master of all diseases and all remedies.

Naturally, Winter had grown to counting Sundays as partially wasted days, so much more could have been accomplished in the quiet office. He rejoiced when his turn came to sit at home and answer urgent calls. He rejoiced still more when the busy doctor occasionally called for his pony and his spring-wagon, and himself to drive, while the carriage horses rested from an all-night toil.

It is true that on these occasions he was obliged to keep very still, for often the only rest which the overworked physician had was during these

spaces between visits. On the Sabbath day he made visits only where his presence was gravely important, but these were often quite enough to fill his morning. Occasionally he would rouse from his "rests" and give Winter a vivid description of the "case," which was trembling in the balance; whether to have it clearly before him, or because he was interested in his young student, Winter could not be sure; but a careful analysis of the method of treatment would be gone over, and the student would feel at the close of such Sabbath days as though he had taken long strides in the direction of what he now boldly declared to himself was his chosen profession.

The little pony, by the way, had become an institution in the doctor's stable, fitting in quite as well as its owner did in the office. The doctor's horses were always busy, and the doctor's children were delighted to have a trim, well-trained little pony and a neat spring-wagon always subject to their call.

"I've been going to get them a pony as soon as I had time to select it," the doctor explained to Winter, "and since a selected one has trotted to our door ready for service, why, we'll rent him and his owner; for the present, at least."

So the pony and the pony's master were satisfied. Because of this arrangement Winter was occasionally called to give service as driver for Miss Sate Decker and any friend who chanced to be

her companion for the day. Miss Sate was sixteen, and a hoyden, in a graceful, girlish way.

"You are not in the least like your Aunt Sarah," would the Doctor say to her occasionally, with a smile and a half-sigh; "she was as gentle as a summer morning, and as sweet as a rosebud; you ought to have been named 'Susie' three times over" — a statement which those who remember Dr. Decker's younger sisters, Susie and Sate, will readily understand.*

It was on a certain October day that Winter and the pony were unexpectedly called into service to take Miss Sate and Miss Lu McClintock, her guest, to Minnehaha Falls, where a picnic was in progress.

"I don't *belong*," she explained to Miss Lu, as they were driving over the lovely road, "they are Nettie's friends, all of them; it is a wonderful reading circle, you must know, and I am not supposed to be old enough and wise enough to join them; but Nettie read with them for a year, before she went East, and in honor of her, and of the fact that she has sent them a class poem for this important occasion, I have been invited to join them and read it. I'm glad enough to do so, for the Falls are lovely, and they will be sure to have nice refreshments, and are pleasant people enough, though so literary that they bore me dreadfully sometimes."

* Little Fishers: and their Nets. By Pansy.

"You girls are all named for your aunties, are you not?" questioned Miss Lu, irrelevantly.

"Every one of us. Papa repeated his own family, in the vain hope that some of us would be like our namesakes, who are simply perfect in his eyes; but, dear me, we disappoint him dreadfully! Aunt Sate is an angel, besides being an artist, and very celebrated; now you know what my prospects are for being angelic! and as for the artistic part, I can't draw even a crooked line right; Nettie may do better; she *is* a little like Aunt Nettie, I think."

They chatted on throughout that long ride, utterly oblivious of the young fellow in the front seat who drove so carefully, avoiding all jolts, turning out skillfully for unruly branches overhanging the winding paths, after they entered the wood road, and seeming quite absorbed in his pony. In point of fact, no word of theirs escaped Winter Kelland; during all that long, bright day, whether driving, or bringing pails of water, or building fires, or roasting corn, or doing any one of the hundred errands which seemed always waiting for him, he was at work studying these people who belonged to the world which he meant some day to enter. Several of the young men were younger than himself, yet they occupied an assured position in the place toward which he was climbing; he watched them, their ways, and words, and looks and laughter; how perfectly free and

easy they were ; unconscious of their hands or their feet ; never in doubt where to sit, or whether to sit or stand ; never at a loss, apparently, for the thing to do and say next. They paid no sort of attention to Winter ; they were not rude ; in fact, they were kind. No one that day spoke other than pleasantly to him ; it was : " Here, my good fellow, just run to the spring for another pail of water, will you ? " or, " Kelland, here's a job for you, if you are at leisure ; " or, " Where's Kelland ? Oh ! there you are ; give us a lift with this ice, if you please. " Kind, genial voices, pleasant thanks for skillful help ; but not one of them said to him : " Kelland, what do you think of that selection ? " or, " Who wrote such a poem ? " or, " How did you like that article on ' English Literature ? ' " In their world and not of it. Nothing was surer. They were very unlike the young men whom he met daily at Mrs. Tryon's table ; they were not supercilious ; they did not in the least look down upon him ; they simply forgot him entirely, save when they wanted his help. He took his solitary dinner which Mrs. Tryon had prepared, and went away from the merry groups and sat under a tree near the pony's side, to eat it ; and did not even know that during his absence Sara Decker said :

" I wonder where Winter is ? Papa cautioned me to be sure that he had lunch. "

But two minutes afterward she had forgotten his existence. He came back and sat on the outer

edge of the circle during its literary exercises. He heard the poem of the absent Nettie, read by her young sister ; and within himself declared that he could have "read that thing much better than she did." He studied the motto in evergreen, which he had helped to hang over the temporary platform as soon as they arrived on the ground. "We study the word and works of God." Why had they chosen it ? he wondered. Were they really studying the Bible ? Did they think themselves living up to its teachings ? If so, did they not know that he possibly might have a soul worth saving ? His lip curled a little over this motto ; he did not understand how it applied ; like all observers who are only on the outside of things, he could not see the hidden life. He hovered about, doing little useful things, after the more formal exercises were concluded and gleams of fun had begun to sparkle through the talk.

"Look what a current those tiny stones have made in the stream," said one, pointing to the swiftly-rushing water. "Who would suppose the little creatures could create such a force !"

"I know it," laughed Sara Decker, and, poising herself on one of the larger of the stones, she struck an attitude of mock oratory and declared, "Men may rise on stepping-stones of their dead selves to greater things."

"Who said that ?" questioned Lu McClintock ;
"I don't remember."

"Winter did." He could have given the next line if he had chosen ; he mused to himself as he gathered and carefully packed lemonade glasses, wondering what they would have said if he had done so. Suppose he should burst forth with a strain from the same poem :

So many worlds, so much to do,
So little done, such things to be !

The two lines seemed to voice for him a thought which at times filled his very soul ; but he did not dare repeat them. The spirit of quotation took possession of the merry idlers ; a young man who had gone out on the "stepping-stones" to join Miss Decker halted in the middle of the stream to say, pointing the while to the hurrying water :

Then heard I, more distinctly than before,
The ocean breathe and its great breast expand ;
And hurrying, came on the defenseless land,
The insurgent waters with tumultuous roar.

As he gave the last line he sent his hat full of the "hurrying" water to the shore, into the very arms of a lazy youth who half-reclined on a grassy bank.

After the merriment which this caused had subsided, the lazy youth put in his contribution :

O, gift of God ! O, perfect day !
Whereon shall no man work, but play ;
Whereon it is enough for me,
Not to be doing, but to be.

"That's all very fine, Dunlap," exclaimed a gen-

tleman who was tugging with a huge basket, "but you'll find there's more poetry than truth in it; you've got to get up this minute and help pack these things back into the carriages; it is really time we were thinking of home."

A chorus of protests greeted him: "O, not yet!" "It is early yet." "Let us have some more quotations." "Let us see who can tell where the next thing quoted is to be found."

Before the words were finished, the lazy youth had slightly changed his position, and was dolefully sighing forth:

All common things, each day's events,
That with the hour begin and end,
Our pleasures and our discontents,
Are rounds by which we may ascend.

"That ought to reconcile you to helping a little, you lazy dog!" declared the one who had urged his assistance, while a half-dozen voices cried out: "Longfellow's Ladder."

"Who can give another verse of it?" questioned the class president, and, receiving no response from the others, the lazy gentleman murmured drowsily:

"We have not wings; we cannot soar."

"No," laughed one of the girls; "but you would do well to remember that the next line is, 'We have *feet*, to scale and climb.'"

The lemonade glasses were now all repacked, and Winter was moving about gathering what

baskets he could, without noise ; no word of the merriment, or of the quotations, escaped him ; not one had been given as yet, but he could have continued the recitation. He had not read many poems, but it seemed to him a curious coincidence that the quotations should be from those over which he had lingered with intense interest. There was a sense of repressed power about him, as he moved softly among the gay companies. If any of them had been interested enough to have given him a glance, they could almost have read the thoughts which were throbbing in his mind.

If any of them had been near him, as he carried the heavily packed basket to the carriage, they would have seen him, after stowing it away, toss his hat on the ground, fold his arms and give vent, in a strong voice full of passionate determination, to the lines which followed the verse last quoted :

The heights by great men reached and kept,
Were not attained by sudden flight ;
But they, while their companions slept,
Were toiling upward in the night.

“ I’ll get there,” he said, wiping the perspiration from his forehead. “ Some day I’ll stand on a point high enough to be equal with these, at least.”

He laughed a little, then, half ashamed of his emotion ; but he had never, since he left the little red schoolhouse, whither he used to walk with Vine, felt so utterly lonely as he did that day. A friendly hand on his shoulder, a cordial voice claim-

ing fellowship with him, could have almost led him whither it would ; but no voice spoke.

During the long, homeward drive, while he was necessarily silent, and the young ladies in his charge were too weary to make their talk very interesting, his mind was busy with the problem of how he should get himself invited to join the Ivy Reading Circle. That it was of the same general character as the one to which Mrs. Tryon had introduced him, had become evident from some of the talk he had heard. The same books were being read, and the same mottoes were in use ; therefore, he argued, it could not be that they would have only those who belonged to their social world.

"I would not want to be invited to their parties," he told himself, with a mixture of humility and pride in the thought ; "I haven't clothes, nor manners, nor *time* for such nonsense ; all I would want would be to meet with them while they were reading, and hear them talk books over, and get their ideas, and — well, to feel that I *belonged* somewhere."

He studied the subject for several days ; he waylaid Mrs. Tryon and asked more questions.

"Dear me, no," she said ; "it *wasn't* rich people, chiefly ; you might know that, or Maria and I wouldn't have belonged ; though, for the matter of that, we went with the best, when we went at all ; our circumstances were different when Mr. Tryon was living. But *real* poor, what some might call

low-down people, belonged to our circle ; some of them worked in the factory ; one of the smartest girls in the circle had to work day and night almost, in a stocking mill, to keep soul and body together ; her mother worked at home, finishing off stockings. I remember once she told me, when the class magazine came from the office, all nice and fresh, she held it before her mother ; and the mother, looking up from her stocking-basket with a queer kind of a smile, said : ‘ Get thee behind me, Satan.’ She felt, you know, that she hadn’t time to read it ; and it looked just like a temptation to her. Poor thing ! she’s gone, since that, where they don’t have to hurry through the days to get ready for the nights. No, we’ve never tried to belong to the one here ; we wouldn’t have time to go out to it ; we have to do our reading in odd minutes ; and then Maria didn’t want to ; she doesn’t know the young people here, and she thinks they are different from her ; sometimes I’m sorry that she doesn’t push right in and try to be one of them ; she could hold her own so far as brains went, but it is a question of clothes, and that is a thing I suppose young men don’t understand very well ; they don’t have to twist and turn, and plan about *clothes*, as girls do ; it’s a mercy they don’t. That subject will wear the young women of this generation all out, I’m afraid. People wonder why there’s so much ‘ *nervous prostration* ’ nowadays ; it is a wonder to me that there are any nerves left to

be prostrated. When you get to be a doctor I hope you will see if there is any cure for a disease which makes folks with fifty cents a week want to look exactly like those who have fifty dollars a day. That isn't quite it, either ; *have* to look something like them or else feel queer and strange, as though they didn't belong to the same world. No, that question didn't come up in the circle we belonged to, because the people all dressed very plainly ; I never thought much about it until I came here, but I see now that the rich ones there dressed as simply as the poor, and no one seemed to think of *dress, anyway.*"

“VERY MUCH IMPROVED.”

CHAPTER XX.

“VERY MUCH IMPROVED.”

THE result of all his thinking was, that Winter went to Dr. Decker for advice. Should he try to join the Ivy Reading Circle? and if so, how should he set about it? The doctor was puzzled, troubled; he gave very little thought to such matters, for the reason that he had little time for anything outside his profession. But he saw difficulties in the way which had not occurred to Winter; still he promised to consider the subject; to see what could be done, and report. The doing so involved him in more embarrassment than he had imagined. His daughter Sate exclaimed over the idea:

“They will never admit him in the world! He is foolish to want to join them. Papa, they are *very* exclusive; you have no idea! They vote on each name, and one negative vote excludes a person; within a few months they have excluded eighteen, some of them from among the best people in town. Imagine such a circle opening its doors to your office boy!”

"Upon my word," said the doctor, "if I had been so unfortunate as to have them open for me, I should want them to open again as soon as possible and let me out. I don't believe in that sort of thing; I should not think it would be to Nettie's taste. Nevertheless, since Winter wants a chance to read with them, I will not dishonor them by giving them no opportunity to be decent."

"It won't do any good, papa; they will just be mortified because they can not gratify you; and it will seem very queer to them that you think he *could* be received; why, they refused Katie Lester last week, and she 's a niece of Judge Watson, you know."

"What in the world has that to do with her qualifications for joining a reading circle?" asked her father somewhat testily; and Miss Sate, finding the question hard to answer, felt that her honored father's education had certainly been defective in some directions, and held her peace.

"Your Aunt Nettie would know how to manage such things," he said, after a thoughtful silence, during which he appeared to be looking straight ahead into space, but was in reality looking back, seeing a neat front room and delicately-broiled fish, and hot coffee, and hungry boys like Rick Walker, and dozens of others, and his sister Nettie, wise beyond her generation, managing it all; fishing for *souls*; he saw it plainly now. "She knew just how to manage such things," a wistful

tenderness in his voice, "but I do not." The sentence ended with a sigh.

It was something which I do not believe the doctor admitted even to himself, but the fact was, he had chosen a wife who seemed not to know how to "manage such things" either. At least she did not manage them in his sister Nettie's way. She was gentle, and graceful, and eminently kind and courteous to all classes of society; she managed her home duties with infinite grace and tact; but when it came to questions like this one she seemed puzzled and troubled; the woman had not, for some reason, developed quite as her girlhood had promised. In answer to the doctor's suggestion that their daughter Sate should see what the Ivy Circle would think of the proposed new member, she replied that she did know, perhaps that would not be wise; Sallie was not herself a member of the circle, and she might be thought to be presuming too much on her father's position; that the young man would hardly enjoy it, she should think; that young people of different grades in society were harder to harmonize than they used to be; that one couldn't make modes of thought over to suit one's self; and a young girl like their Sate could not very well be aggressive; it would not be thought well of.

The doctor, hurried, worried, thought again of his sister Nettie; looked at his fair, cultured wife, smiled gratefully as he thought of all the beauty of

her life, and of what she had once done for him ; told himself that people could not all be alike, and of course it would be very unfortunate if they were ; thought of his absent daughter Nettie, and wondered with a frown whether she really had these “silly notions” which the young people of to-day seemed to be adopting. He wished she were here, just to see whether the young Nettie would have any of the skill of the Nettie of his boyhood ; and this made him think again of Winter Kelland ; he of all persons ought to try to help the boy ; but how ? Judge McClintock could have done it when he was “Jerry Mack,” and Dr. Decker remembered with a faint smile that a boy whom he used to know, named “Norm,” had certainly had great success in winning boys ; “but they were very low-down boys,” he told himself again in perplexity ; “if this fellow smoked, or chewed tobacco, or played cards, or drank beer, I should know how to set to work to help him ; as it is —” and then he left the table in haste in answer to an urgent call, the question still unsolved ; and Mrs. Decker said to her daughter with a sigh that it was a pity papa’s few minutes of leisure with his family must be disturbed by wearisome thoughts about making over society. She should think the boy, Winter, ought to be grateful for his present opportunities.

Nevertheless, Dr. Decker did not dismiss the subject. In the course of the busy day he came in contact with one of the young men whose names

had been mentioned as prominent in the Ivy Reading Circle ; to him he abruptly presented the wishes of the new aspirant ; he named the young man as his student, of whom he thought unusually well ; enlightened somewhat by the remarks of Miss Sate, he understood the flush which rose on the young man's face, and his embarrassed attempts to be very deferential to the doctor and yet have nothing to do with the young student of whom he thought well ; understood them enough not to be greatly surprised when, two hours later, a carefully-worded note was brought him, to the effect that the circle was *very* sorry ; but it had resolved to receive no new members from any source whatever at present ; it was just large enough for comfort ; and, in short, no one, *however desirable*, would be received unless a vacancy should occur. At that particular moment the doctor was standing by the bedside of a young lady in high life who was suffering from an attack of nervous prostration.

"And with all the rest," said the worried mother, "she has just joined a reading circle ; as though she hadn't enough now to wear her out !"

"O, well, mamma !" the girl languidly explained, "I was only voted in last night at ten o'clock, so I do not think that can have harmed me yet."

"What is that ?" asked the doctor, whose note had been handed him in company with several telegrams just as he was entering this house, and

he had taken time to glance them over ; " so you belong to a reading circle with all the rest. Is it the Ivy Circle ? "

" Yes, sir ; I don't expect to read much ; but they coaxed me to join, because they have such good times together. "

" Nevertheless, " the doctor told himself, with a peculiar smile on his face, as he entered his carriage, "*nevertheless*, I believe in reading circles. "

He reported the state of the case as carefully as he could to his " student " that afternoon. They were driving rapidly through the city at the time, and the doctor could not see the flush which spread all over the young man's face, reaching to his very temples ; he did not understand — how should he — what the desire had become to the lonely fellow. His own boyhood had been hard, had been devoid of friendships, so he supposed ; but nothing like the utter loneliness of the life which Winter Kelland lived was known to him by experience. How should a boy with a " Sister Nettie " and a friend Jerry Mack know anything of such friendlessness as Winter Kelland's ?

He said almost nothing beyond the brief words of thanks for the doctor's kindness, and that hurried man told himself that the poor fellow was not much surprised or troubled ; probably he had understood how it would be. Then he dismissed the matter from his thoughts.

So did Winter ; but before doing it, he sat down

alone in the little back room on Mrs. Tryon's third floor—the little spot in all the great world which was "home"—and went over his life as well as he could, from the county poorhouse, through Mrs. Josiah Griggs' kitchen and Miss Putnam's garden, up to this attic-room. He took out from his vest-pocket a little book two inches square and looked at it tenderly; it was the memory of a kind, friendly voice. He took from one of the corners of his pocket-book a small piece of newspaper, carefully folded; he spread it out and slowly read the words: "There are valiant souls who, without family prestige, without incitement on the part of father or mother, seem early in life to take a wide view, feel the necessity and say: 'By God's help, with our own right hand and what brain-power we have, we will attain what culture we can.'"

He read it three times, although the words were almost as familiar to him as his own name; then slowly folded and replaced it, as though it were a talisman; then he folded his arms and thought.

"I shall do it," he said at last, aloud and slowly. "For years I have meant to *try* toward it; now I mean to *accomplish*, if I live. 'With what brain-power I have I will attain,' but I must do it alone; no reading circles for me, at least not until I can command broadcloth, and perfumes, and plenty of elegant leisure; and then I will have nothing to do with them; they are shams. I'll rise without

their help, without any help; "fight my way up into power."

He was quoting again from the bit of paper. He did not know how much those quoted words were helping him; he did not know how much the book two inches square had helped him; he thought, poor, foolish fellow, that he "fought" alone; whereas a network of circumstances had been surrounding him all his life, and drawing him as steadily as he would allow himself to be drawn, in the direction in which he fancied he had always wanted to go. But he is young; have patience with him. The time will come when he will understand himself and his "happenings" much better than now. From this time, however, he put away with firm hand all thoughts of belonging to a reading circle.

"I will be my own reading circle," he said, with a grim smile; and he read and studied harder than ever.

And the months went by on swift wings, and many changes, of the sort that are almost imperceptible, because of their gradual character, came to Winter Kelland. Just when he ceased to help the hostler with his morning work among the horses, he could not himself have told. He remembered that the occasions when he was needed in the office at that hour grew more and more frequent, and that the doctor often said to him, "To-morrow morning I shall want you here at

six;" or, "On Thursday morning you may go with me to the hospital;" but there was never a day in which it was distinctly said to him: "After this your work will not be about the stables any more;" yet the fact was unquestioned that, save to feed and pet his own pony, he and the stables had parted company. It was much the same about answering the bell. He had seldom opportunity for comforting the bell-boy now. "Let Thomas remain this evening; I shall want you in the inner office," was the message that grew more and more familiar to his ears, until, without positive command or defined moment when it became his place. Winter now recognized that his place was within call of the doctor, to mark this paragraph, or cut out that one, or copy such and such a reference, or carry a verbal message to a patient or a younger physician.

"You keep Winter with you a great deal of the time now, don't you?" questioned his observant wife, and the doctor had answered in a tone which would have made Winter's heart throb with pleasure: "The most satisfactory fellow I ever had about me; he knows where everything is without looking for it, and he knows just what I want without my asking for it; I don't know how I am ever to send him off to attend lectures; I can't spare him."

"Are you going to send him away?"

"Why, of course," said the doctor, an aston-

ished stare accompanying the words, "didn't you know he was to be a physician?"

"I didn't know," spoken meekly; "your office boys do not all go to medical college."

Dr. Decker laughed.

"That is true; I never had an office boy nor a student like him; he was born for a doctor; it would be a tempting of Providence not to help him; not that he needs it, but I shall give it."

"He is *very* much improved," said Mrs. Decker.

She meant as to his clothes, and the arrangement of his hair, and the management of his hands and feet. It was true, he had improved in all these respects; imperceptibly in part, as regarded his own eyes; much of the improvement had been the result of constantly seeing and hearing gentlemen in the doctor's office; some of it — though of this he did not dream, and at that stage of his career would have scorned the idea — still it is true, some of it grew out of his daily association with the young men whom he met at Mrs. Tryon's table. They did not know much, but they knew how to wear their clothes, and indeed, how to buy them and where; and their hands and feet had ceased to trouble them, and insensibly Winter caught many of their ways, which were helpful. There came a time when he thought of this with humiliation; certainly they had been in a degree helpful to him, but in what possible way had he been an advantage to them? The humiliation

came when he realized that he might have been. One other little matter occurred which had its influence. The doctor's eldest daughter, Nettie, came home for her school vacation. She was not long at home, but she was one of those who have not to stay long in a place to have their influence felt. She was interested always in her father's students, or office boys, or bell boys, or whatever their position; she was interested in the coachman and stable boy, and had always made it apparent. It was therefore not strange that she showed immediate interest in Winter.

"Papa, he is of another stamp than most of them," she said interrogatively.

"I wondered if you would discover it," said the father in great satisfaction. "He is quite different. I haven't time to be as interested in him as I should like to be, but that does not matter; he does not need it; he will make his way alone, and so far as the young people of our city are concerned, he will have to; *they* do not discover any difference between him and other plodders." Then he told her the little episode of the reading circle.

"What nonsense," said this energetic young woman of eighteen. "I did not know our circle was so absurdly exclusive. I knew they did not want a very large company, because they thought it would be unwieldy; but I supposed they would be ready to hold out a helping hand; it is the very spirit of the organization to do so."

"It is the spirit of this branch of the organization to glorify itself; I fancy its unwritten prayer must be: 'I thank Thee that I am not as other men; I wear fine broadcloth, and fine leather, and kid gloves on occasion, and have a father who has a good bank account.' " The doctor was not often sarcastic; his daughter Sate glanced at him, with cheeks slightly flushed. But his daughter Nettie laughed merrily.

"I almost wonder that Sate did not interfere in this case," she said, "though you are not a member, are you? I wouldn't be, Pussie, if that is the spirit to be exhibited; I am ashamed of them."

"I don't know," said the doctor's wife, in slow, sweet tones, "they are not so much to be blamed; at the most it was thoughtlessness; they did not realize that they could be helpful to the young man; it would be different now perhaps; he *is very much improved*, Nettie; very different in appearance from what he was at the time he applied for membership; I presume they thought it was merely a passing whim on his part; they believed him to be your father's office boy simply, and could not know that he really meant work of a literary character."

The doctor and his eldest daughter exchanged glances, and the doctor said, his voice very gentle: "Nettie and I need the gentle mother to keep us sweet-spirited; and careful about hunting after motes, or beams, which is it?"

CHAPTER XXI.

PROGRESS.

MAMMA always has the thoughtful ‘other side’ in mind,” Nettie said, her glance for her mother full of love ; but she was not ready to leave the subject.

“Do you think they would feel differently now? Let us try them. I’ll invite the circle to meet with me on Thursday, and give them an entertainment in the way of cake and cream, or something of that sort ; may I, mamma? And we will have Winter’s help in entertaining them, and propose his name for membership at the close.”

The doctor laughed outright.

“I’m glad you have come home, daughter,” he said, as he arose to leave them ; “*we* needed you, Sate and I, didn’t we, Pussie?”

She was true to her word ; not only planned, but performed ; securing a most efficient helper in Winter ; he was ready to drive her to any point which she wished to reach ; to hunt up every reference she needed for the literary portion of the scheme ; to do, in short, her bidding in whatever

direction it led ; the doctor looked on, well pleased, and put himself to no small inconvenience to give Winter all the time he needed ; and only the mother watching it carefully, said to Sate :

“ Your father thinks that all this could have been done at any time ; he does not realize what a difference a few months of his society and help make in a young man ; I should not know Winter Kelland for the boy who came to us.”

In all of which she was in a degree correct.

That evening was one for Winter to remember. He made his first appearance into what he then named society. He dressed with care, and was enough in the past to wonder curiously what Mrs. Josiah Griggs would have said, could she have seen him. When he came into the brightly-lighted parlors it was Nettie herself who turned to him with a smile, and, making a tour of the rooms with him, introduced “ our friend Mr. Kelland.” They recognized him, of course ; they had met him often in the streets since the day of the picnic ; some of them were inclined to stare a little ; but for the most part, they were well-bred young men and women, willing to follow a leader, especially since that leader was Dr. Decker’s eldest daughter, the pride of their circle ; besides, this well-dressed, very well appearing young man did not look in the least like the “ driver ” who had helped pack the lemonade glasses so skillfully, and whom they had addressed as “ my good fellow.” He really was a

good deal at home ; and was somewhat surprised with himself for the feeling ; but he had been so constantly with Miss Nettie during the week of preparation, and she appealed to him so entirely as a matter of course now for help, whether it was with a curtain that she wished drawn, or a paragraph in a book that she needed, that he dropped into his place as her acknowledged helper. And when, in the course of the evening, she called on him to read a class poem, he demonstrated to his own satisfaction that little Vine's opinion of his powers in that direction, given so long ago, were not utterly at fault. There were touches in the poem which he keenly felt as spoken to his own experience, and if he was not able to understand the faith in the final award by the great Master, he was at least able to appreciate the poetry of the thought, and rendered it as though he felt it :

If only to labor and wait,
In the lowliest tasks be thine ;
If faithful, the Master will say,
That *work* and the *workmen* are *mine*.

To have heard his rendering you would not have imagined that he utterly ignored the claims of that Master !

"Upon my word," said the young man, who had lazily recited Longfellow, at the picnic, "that individual is a reader ! I would not mind having written a poem myself, if he would read it. He's a diamond in disguise, isn't he ?"

This gentleman was popular in the circle; in the course of the evening it began to be whispered through the rooms that the doctor's student was a brilliant fellow, destined to rise high, and had been discovered and was being polished by the doctor and his family. The circle expressed itself in undertone as more than willing to open its mystic doors to him. When, at the proper moment, Nettie went through the formula of proposing the new name, and the circle voted on it, during the ten minutes that Winter had been summoned to receive a message in the doctor's absence, there was not a dissenting vote. Nettie's eyes were bright when the secretary, with a hint that the occurrence was unusual and flattering announced the result and proposed that the new member be formally welcomed. But then occurred a surprise; the "new member" was grateful for the honor proposed; had no doubt that the circle could be made an eminently useful factor in the hands of many, but for himself he would be obliged to decline membership; his time was already so fully occupied, his interests were so pressing, that it would not be possible for him to assume anything more. There was a time, not so very long ago, when he should have been more grateful for admission to their circle than perhaps they could imagine; and here the young daughter Sate wondered whether he did or did not flash a half-reproachful glance at her; how was she to have helped it?

But now, however much he might have desired it, membership was quite out of the question. They even condescended to urge him, but he was inexorable. Whatever they might say, however flattering their appeals might grow, of one thing he held himself sure, — foolish fellow that he was, — he would have nothing to do with their reading-circle.

“I was disappointed in him, a little, papa,” Nettie said the next morning. “I had an idea that he would be able to rise above such pettiness and take the help which we could really give him.”

“Well, I don’t know,” said the doctor, laughing, half-pleased, half-vexed with his student, “I must say it was rather a natural feeling.”

“O, yes, it was natural, but it was not *noble*. I rated him a little too high ; that is all.”

And I wish, for Winter Kelland’s sake, that he could have overheard those words.

In due course of time, Miss Nettie’s vacation was over, and she returned to her Eastern school ; but something of what she had accomplished abided. Winter found that he had now a bowing acquaintance with every member of the Ivy Circle ; and once or twice he was cordially invited to “come around ” and take part in the exercises ; but, true to his determination to stand as much in his own light as possible, so far as this means of culture was concerned, he courteously declined. There was, however, a little excuse for his obstinacy ; as the days passed he became increasingly

busy. More and more the doctor claimed him; but the work given was almost sure to be in line with what he was studying, and of such a character as to be more helpful to him than anything else which he could have done; he dimly felt this at the time, but in after years, when the full light of the doctor's helpfulness dawned on him, there were circumstances connected with the memory which started a regretful tear that he had not understood sooner.

Meantime, there was steadily opening to him a new avenue to self-improvement; on the doctor's list there were constantly grave cases which required for a part, sometimes for the entire night, the watchful attendance of one who sufficiently understood the disease, and the hopes and plans of the doctor, to watch intelligently and report promptly any change in the patient. One night there were two of these cases; the doctor, hesitating, doubtful whether to try to remain himself, or to trust to the nurse, looked at his watch, looked at the patient, then glanced at Winter who had been assisting him and stood waiting:

"I believe I'll let you stay," he said suddenly; "Drummond can not leave Mr. Parsons to-night, and I ought to go home and get a few hours of rest. I believe you could do what needs to be done."

"I think I could," said Winter; he tried to speak quietly to hide the quiver of eagerness in

his voice, but the doctor noted it and smiled slightly.

"I'll try you," he said, and there followed careful directions.

This was the first night of watching, but by no means the last ; sometimes it was but for a few hours, sometimes it was to remain in the house within call. There were occasions when, even though he particularly wished to stay, Winter was ordered to his room and bed. The doctor kept careful guard over the young student, whose enthusiasm could so readily have run away with his prudence. As the days went on and Dr. Decker heard what Winter did not, he often thought it over with a satisfied smile.

"Can't that young student of yours spend the night here?" queried an anxious mother whose boy was very sick.

"I'll send Drummond around, I think," was the answer ; then the mother : "But I would much rather have Kelland, if you think he would do as well. Fred likes him—likes to have him raise his head, or do anything for him ; he is so watchful, and skillful, and quiet ; we all like him very much ; he could sleep most of the night, only be ready if Fred needed him."

And Kelland stayed.

"Suppose you let that young man who comes with you sometimes watch the case this afternoon," said a professional nurse on another occa-

sion ; "he can do what is wanted quite as well as the other, and we like him better ; his manner in a sick-room is perfect."

"Could you lend Kelland to me?" asked a young physician, turning back after a half-hour's talk with the great doctor about a case which troubled him ; "I shall feel less nervous if I have his help ; he is very cool and quiet, I have observed."

"I shall have to watch my student," would Dr. Decker say to himself ; "they will wear out his body and spoil his nerves before their time if I'm not careful. He is evidently popular, not only with the sick, but what is rarer, with the nurses."

So that really, as you can plainly see, there was very little time for reading circles or anything but hard study, and hard work generally, in the line of his chosen profession.

You think he is now fairly launched on the road to success, and that I, who admit myself to be very fond of him, must be quite satisfied ? I do not know that he was ever in greater danger than at the time of which I write. The danger of absorbing himself utterly and hopelessly in a busy, self-satisfied, successful life, which was entirely for this world. He was daily growing satisfied, not indeed with his attainments, but with the sense of certainty that he *could* attain, and was steadily doing so. The feeling of loneliness and of need for companionship had largely passed from

him. He was too busy for companionship, or at least for society; as for acquaintances, as I told you, he had several; they daily increased. Scarcely a day passed that some one did not chance to introduce him to some one else who was quite worth knowing. The doctors who frequented the office had for some time nodded to him, calling him "Kelland," and accepting him tacitly as one who was some day to be of their number. More than that, the younger ones began to seek his help, not only in the manner I have already mentioned, but in other ways. They talked with him on occasion as though he were already one of them; asked his opinion of this or that question, in the belief that he might have heard words of wisdom fall from the lips of the oracle.

Occasionally one said to him confidentially, "Find out what Dr. Decker thinks about this, can't you, in a casual way and let me know?" And in all these ways was he being drawn into their world. As for Mrs. Tryon's world, it had grown endurable, even rather pleasant. The young men no longer felt doubtful about him. One of them had an uncle, who had a brother who was a physician in a neighboring city, and who had called Dr. Decker in counsel; and it was confidently reported at the Tryon dinner-table that Dr. Decker had said to this brother physician in so many words that young Kelland was "destined for a brilliant career." It made a vast difference in the

feelings of the young man with the waxed mustache, and indeed in the feelings of most of them. They began to do more than nod to Winter; they occasionally asked him how Mr. Jones or Mr. Smith was, and listened to his reply with a deference which showed that they realized the importance of information which came from him. Occasionally they asked about Dr. Decker's boy, Gerald, as to what his father's plans were for him, and in various ways intimated that they knew their fellow-boarder had knowledge of circles which never touched their lives.

With Mrs. Tryon the young man was friendly and patronizing. He kept himself somewhat posted as to her place in the book she was struggling through, and offered her bits of assistance, which awakened her hearty gratitude. He brought Maria a good engraving of Bryant, of which Dr. Decker had given him several, thereby adding greatly to the weight of gratitude which the mother felt, and receiving hearty thanks from the wide-awake, sensible, steadily advancing Maria. It was really all very pleasant. He had moved down one flight of stairs into a little hall bedroom which was unexpectedly vacated, and had fitted it up in a very cheery way and felt at home there, or would have felt so had there been any time to spend in it. At first he had planned it for his Sunday afternoons, but it was now so much a matter of course that he should spend them in the

doctor's office, within call, if any information was wanted more than the bell-boy could give, that he now went there directly from dinner. And his mornings? Why, he still went to church when his duties at the doctor's did not conflict. But whether the preacher spoke in the English or Greek tongue he could hardly have told. It was now his invariable custom to lose himself in a medical work even before the text was named, and to come out of his intense study only in time for the benediction.

And the Christian doctor? Yes, he *was* a Christian, earnest to the heart's core. His highest hopes and strongest desires centered in Jesus of Nazareth, but at that time you couldn't have made Winter Kelland believe it! He believed that Dr. Decker's highest hopes centered in his beloved profession. How do I explain it? O, well! you are constantly to remember that Dr. Decker was an overworked man; that he had almost no time which it was right for him to call his own; that when he rode or walked, or sat with this young man, some life was always trembling in the balance, and which way the scales would drop was depending, humanly speaking, upon himself. He was by no means silent about this greatest subject; he spoke of it as a matter of course.

"The Lord isn't going to give me that little Blossom; he has determined to take it to himself."

This was the way in which he once announced to Winter the swiftly-approaching death of a little

child. In some such way he often spoke to him, as one who understood that he claimed to be only a servant of the Great Physician. And Winter called these expressions "the result of old habits of thought." Had he honored the doctor less, he would have called them "cant." But, really, they passed for mere *words*, without soul in them. Not that he was an unbeliever in the Christian religion; he would not have called himself that. He was simply a neglecter of it to such an alarming extent that he could not but imagine that there was by no means so much of it as sermons, and prayers, and Bible verses would at first sight make one think.

It was eminently proper to have a Sabbath form of worship. He believed in church-going and in public prayer. All these things were safeguards to lives not busy enough to be safe in themselves. When he was a doctor, eminent, and crowded with care, as he now fully expected to be, he should attend church as Dr. Decker did, just as often as he could. It was a grand example for a busy man, who did not need it himself, to set for others. And he kept the little book two inches square, in his pocket, and locked Miss Putnam's Bible, wrapped in tissue paper, in his most treasured drawer, and took credit to himself for his spirit of reverence, and was altogether self-complacent and content. There had been times when a few wise words on this subject would have turned his life into another channel, but those times were past.

CHAPTER XXII.

EVOLUTION.

THE elder of the two occupied a low rocker, upholstered in pale blue, and matching exquisitely with all the surroundings of the pretty room. An open book lay in her lap, the place kept by one hand, while with the other she toyed caressingly with the brown hair of the girl who curled in a graceful attitude at her feet before the open window, whose outlook was the lovely lake, up and down which many boats were flitting. A handsome wharf was also in view, and a brilliantly-painted steamer, from whose red smoke-stack the glow of sunset was reflecting itself, was just coming into port, gay with music and alive with people.

"So you have been here from the very first," said the elder lady, musingly, and in the tone which denotes a continuation of a topic which has already been somewhat discussed.

"From *before* the first," laughed the girl. "My earliest recollections are connected with walks through the woods to this point, when it enjoyed uninterrupted solitude. Genuine solitude; birds

and squirrels held undisputed possession. Occasionally a fisherman's row-boat would reach as far out as this, but it was not often. Such a thing as a steamer making a landing here never entered even my dreams; and as for *houses* in these woods, and avenues, and graveled walks, and hotels and temples, and people thronging everywhere, it would have made an exquisite fairy tale had my imagination only been equal to such a strain."

"I cannot imagine solitude in connection with the place," said the elder lady, dreamily.

"You can not imagine anything about it; no one can who comes to the place now for the first time. You should have seen it evolve itself out of chaos. I watched the first house go up; helped build it, I may almost say; at least, I suggested several things which the builder assured me were improvements. And I literally helped the first family move in; there was a baby with whom I played for hours, to his and my great comfort; thereby reaching home so late that my mother was frightened. Our home was fully two miles from here."

"Oh! why, was it? I thought you always lived on the grounds."

"These were not always 'grounds.' It was *woods*, I assure you; dense and silent; it was a great thing for this part of the country when a camp-meeting association camped here for the first time; that was the beginning of revolution;

but of course it suggested nothing of this. People thought for a long time that it was to be simply a camp-meeting ground; there are some who seem to think so still."

"And is the place so very different from what it was at first? I mean at the first regular meeting of this new idea?"

"*Very* different," with emphasis; "instead of the amphitheatre we had a great tent, with stumps standing around here and there, and vines straggling in and squirrels hopping about. The 'temple' was another tent — everything was in tents; even the hotel, not the 'athenæum,' " — with a merry laugh, — "but a dining-hall, with oil-cloth for table linen and boards stretched lengthwise for seats, and two-tined steel forks and dishes to match."

"Really!" said the elder lady, incredulously.

"Really; oh! we thought the accommodations royal. 'Such an improvement on the usual camp-meeting management,' I heard many say; those were the times when people insisted on calling it a camp-meeting.

"The auditorium was lovely in those days; the park, you know, where the great trees are, and the fountain; it was filled with seats which reached away back to the hill; on those first moon-lighted nights when the seats were filled with people and the band played, and the great choir sang, I caught my first idea of what heaven might possibly be like. The old auditorium will always have a charm for me

beyond anything else ; we have outgrown the spot, so that it will not do for a general gathering-place, but I look to see it memorialized some day in a becoming manner ; I'm sure I don't know *how* ; no idea I have as yet heard suggested suits *my* memories of the place."

"And where was the museum?"

"The museum was *not* ; it had not yet been 'evolved.' Neither had the lovely hall. Where it stands was a grove ; a magnificent grove ; the prettiest spot on the grounds ; I thought so as a child, and have not changed my opinion. I used to dream there ; I spent a great deal of my childhood in that grove, and had a hundred visions of what I would do and say there some day ; I dreamed out many a flower-strewn path leading to it, and more than one 'golden gate' of entrance, but they were not in the least like what has come to pass."

"It is a very great and beautiful thing which has come to pass," the elder lady said, speaking earnestly. "Every hour the scheme grows on me. I have been deeply interested in it since the first year of my visit here ; that makes you open your eyes, dear ; you have always taken it for granted that I was never here before, because I exclaim over things so much ; but, indeed, the changes have been very great ; no, it was not at the first ; that was why I wanted your impression of the *very* first things, because to me the improvements are simply marvelous, and yet I can imagine that the

changes must mean a great deal more to you who saw the first visible outlook of the idea."

"When were you here?" Vine questioned eagerly.

"The year our wonderful circle was formed, which is reaching around the globe."

"I remember the day and hour; and you were here then!"

"Why, Miss Force, you cannot think how strange that seems to me."

"Suppose you remember that I am simply Elice to you; do you think I can bring myself to say 'Miss Wilmeth?' I think you will always be just *Vine* to me, if I should meet you when you are a sweet old grandmother in gray hair and the whitest of caps."

The girl laughed a sweet, pleased laugh.

"I like to say Elice," she said, "it is such a beautiful name; but it seems almost rude sometimes. I'm *so* glad you have been here before. I wonder if I saw you? I may have done so, many times, and not have known that I was near you; and yet I don't believe it; something would have told me. The first day when you stepped from the boat and I watched you inquiring your way, I said to myself: 'I love her; she is my friend; if I never speak to her in this world, I shall go up to her as soon as I see her in heaven and say: "You are my friend; you have been ever since that summer day when you came through the assembly gates in

eighteen hundred and eighty-four. Do you remember?" All this I planned to say to you; and I remember I said to myself: 'It may be the year eighteen *thousand* and eighty-four when I shall say it to her; because I may be thousands upon thousands of years in heaven before I meet her; but I shall say it.' "

Miss Force laughed, a tender, appreciative laugh, as she said:

"What an imaginative little girl it is! I can imagine her creating a fairyland and peopling it with almost as many wonders as have grown up with her on this spot. Did you live in this house from the first?"

"From the first; my father built it the winter after the opening meeting; he had a chance that season to do some work on the grounds, and was decently paid for it, for almost the first time in his life; and it made him resolve to come here and try to make a living. We were very poor in those days, Elice; and the house, why, you could not certainly imagine it to be the same now, if you had seen it at first; indeed, the frame is all that is the same; it was quite unfinished: paper partitions over the rough beams for several years; and we kept boarders, too! Imagine people furnishing their boarders' rooms with a little looking-glass ten inches square, a pine bedstead, a shelf covered with paper for a washstand, and room for one wooden-seated chair squeezed in at the foot of the

bed. And only calico curtains to divide the next little room from this! Yet it was palatial in those days, and from the first people liked to come here; they liked my mother's table. We had only oil-cloth for table-cloths, and napkins were quite beyond us; yet the people who boarded with us one season came the next and brought their friends, and it came to pass that our house was crowded."

"I do not wonder at that in the least," said Miss Force sympathetically; "but what a bower of beauty you have made of the house!"

"I think it pretty," Vine said, glancing about the room with innocent pride; "every article in the room, and indeed in the house, has a history. There was one troubled year when my father and mother held long councils together about the changes that prophesied ill to them; father said houses were growing better here each season, better finished and furnished, and we could not hope, another summer, to get boarders in an unfinished and unfurnished house; that he hoped to do a little toward the house during the winter, but to furnish was out of the question. I lay awake and cried, that night, because I was such a useless girl, and could not help them in any way. But the next day brought a revelation. There was a lady here giving lectures on decorative art. I went because I happened to have an hour of leisure, and always went to everything I could. I didn't expect to

get anything which could be utilized in our little unfurnished house ; but the lady was just aglow with ideas ; furniture, and curtains and decorations of exquisite sorts I found could be made of almost nothing.

“ The next afternoon I coaxed mother to go, and to the next lecture father went ; those three lectures made a revolution in our home. Father is ingenious, and mother is — well, mother is *everything*. Father made the furniture — those chair frames, every one are home-made — and mother and I decorated. A few yards of cambric, and of ten-cent Nottingham lace, and of unbleached muslin, and of cheese-cloth, two or three papers of Diamond Dye, and a few quires of butchers’ paper — and what a change came over our home ! The best of it was to see how it pleased and cheered father ; mother said we had put new life into him. We worked like bees all winter, and the first coming of summer guests repaid us. The summer before our rooms were all taken, but not until late, when some of our old boarders came back, and they came only in the height of the season. But this summer of which I am telling you, people would take a peep into our blue and white, and pink and white, rooms, with their toilet draperies of Nottingham, and their friezes of brown paper, and their portières of cheese-cloth, and say, ‘ How perfectly lovely ! ’ and engage the rooms on the instant. Mother used to say, half indignantly,

that she might have given them sour bread and burned meats, and they would have been content so long as their rooms looked stylish and pretty ; but that isn't so, of course ; the pleasure would not have lasted if things had not matched. So, as I tell you, everything about our life has 'evolved' from this idea. Father's little farm had barely furnished him with enough in the past to keep his family from starving ; we were so far, you know, from any good market ; but the market came to us, and father, after awhile, got the entire farm into working order, to raise fruits and vegetables for the summer crowds ; then it began to pay. Our butter, and our cows, and our berries became quite the fashion."

"And you owe your education also to the idea, do you not ?"

"Indeed I do. Of course, only a common-school education would have been within my reach ; and it was very common indeed, I assure you, in those days ; but it is a good school now ; that is one of the beauties of this whole scheme ; it reaches out its long arms in all directions, and plants seeds which spring up in blessings. That common school had to reform, and become modern, and advanced, and all that sort of thing ; it could not have lived at all if it had not. As for me, I was a sort of sponge, bent on absorbing everything within my reach. I joined the French class and afterward the German ; then the Latin teacher

came here to call on a boarder, and told father I ought to begin Latin, and invited me to his class, and I was charmed and slipped in some way ; and so it went on until I found myself taking up a full course of study in all directions ; I've been a member of the 'correspondence class' ever since its organization."

"You are a fair specimen of what the idea can accomplish when it has willing subjects," said Miss Force ; "a first-class boarding-school education without spending a night away from home."

"The boarding-school came to me," laughed Vine. "It has been great fun to sit at home and have the best come to my very doors to teach me ; I, who thought mournfully that when I was through with arithmetic there would be nobody to teach me algebra, and I should drop behind. Our common school was not sufficiently advanced for algebra in the days before the birth of this idea. Think of it !"

"The question is, Of whom were you afraid of dropping behind ?" said Miss Force mirthfully. "It was such a strange idea for a little girl to have, who was on a par with all about her ; it shows a natural reaching out after higher attainments — a reaching out not born of anything outside of her growing mind."

"I don't know," said truthful Vine, speaking slowly, a warm flush creeping over her face ; "I think it *was* outside of myself in a degree. I had

a friend who had gone away from here, and of whom I believed great things. I expected to be proud of him some time, and for years there hovered about me a desire to be sufficiently his equal to be able to enjoy his society ; suppose I should meet him — in heaven, you know.”

“Of course ! do you mean that you have never met him since you were a little girl ? ”

“O, no ! and I have never heard from him nor of him. He may be an ignoramus for all I know, but I don’t believe it ; at twelve he was too well started in another direction to make a good ignoramus.”

“And his memory pushed you forward toward self-education. Really, influence is a solemn thing. But, Vine dear, with your intense enthusiasm for everything connected with this idea, how is it that you have never connected yourself with its reading circle ? Are you waiting until your years of study are over before you take hold of it ? That is a fairly good idea, unless you are willing to take the education slowly, spreading it over more years and supplementing it with the reading ; that really would be the wise way, I believe ; but with your intense nature, I should have expected you to plunge into the circle heart and soul, the very hour it had birth.”

“I want to talk to you about that, Elice. Suppose we take a walk and watch the moon rise, while I unburden my mind of its troubles. You

do not mean to attend the lecture to-night, I think?"

"No more lectures for this day," Miss Force said, shaking her head emphatically; "the two o'clock one gave me mental food enough to grow on for years."

CHAPTER XXIII.

"IN HIS NAME."

HAVING watched for some time the wonderful display of shimmering moonlight on the silver water, the two friends went, by way of the miniature "Holy Land" up the hill, until they struck an avenue that led directly to the white-pillared Hall. Here they seated themselves, in full view of the platform and desk, which showed clearly in the moonlight. "Now we are a 'Round table,'" said Miss Force, merrily, "and I will lead the exercises and ask your reason for not being a member of the circle."

"It may seem a silly reason to you; that is, the underlying one may; I thought it better, on the whole, to wait until I was more advanced in my regular education; but I might, as you suggest, have read the books by degrees, in connection with my studies; I thought of it; the real reason why I have not done so, is because the circle disappoints me."

Miss Force regarded her with surprise.

"Treason!" she said, playfully, yet with an

undertone of earnestness, "where I should least look for it ; in the heart of one who was not only 'evolved' with the idea, but has been fed on its life, and grown with its growth."

"It is true," Vine said, answering the laugh, "I know you will think me silly ; or perhaps unreasonable, but the circle disappoints me."

"The last charge I should have expected from you ; if you knew about it a great many things which I know, I do not believe it would."

"Perhaps not ; tell them to me ; I don't want to be disappointed in anything which has to do with the scheme. I do not mean that it is all disappointment ; I know of hundreds to whom it has been a blessing ; and on occasion I can wax eloquent over its value."

"Is it the old charge of superficiality, my dear ?"

"I hope not ; that is worn out, is it not ? I flatter myself that I think a little too carefully to advance such ideas."

"Good ! But what do you say to the objection ? Of course you have heard it ; and we hear it still, from shallow people, or ignorant ones ; the world is not yet entirely wise."

"Oh ! I hear it occasionally ; though not very often. The people who come to these grounds from year to year, are not the ones who harp on it, you know ; they are more likely to draw long breaths of fatigue and talk about 'exhaustion ;' exactly as though they supposed the management expected

to see them in bodily presence at each lecture, recitation, and Normal drill. But the charge of being superficial, has not troubled me much since I was driven when quite a young girl to Webster, to see exactly what the word meant. I was at the pert age, and I remember the intense satisfaction with which I said to a gentleman: 'Do you really think there would be less probability of my wanting to know more of a subject, because I had gotten some ideas about it through the Reading Circle, than there would be if I remained profoundly ignorant of it? For my part I think *introductions* to great thoughts, and to great men, are sometimes stepping stones toward knowing them better.'

"It is nothing of that sort which troubles me; I'm afraid it will be difficult for me to put my feelings into words. Did you never have a friend who was so nearly what in all respects you thought she ought to be, as to have her faults vex you unutterably, make you feel as though you could not have it so, and at times, as though you would have nothing more to do with her? Perhaps that illustrates, as nearly as I can tell it, my sensations toward the circle."

"I understand; but tell me in what way it disappoints."

" 'Thus ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other undone.' Does that verse seem to you to apply to so many things in life? I have seen so many enthusiastic members of the circle ;

people who worked for it with an energy which almost overwhelmed me. I know several young ladies who are always on the alert to get others interested; they plan and scheme, set many an ingenious little trap, and spend time and money lavishly to get hold of just one more; and when she or he is caught, they beam with delight, and straightway turn their energies upon another subject. Then they are all the time planning how to make the gatherings more attractive, more helpful, more brilliant in every way; in short, it would not be possible to be in their company for two consecutive—hours, I had almost said minutes,—without being made familiar with the workings of their hobby. And these young ladies are by no means isolated instances; they serve rather as illustrations; enthusiastic effort to further the interests of the circle, seem to be characteristic of its members."

Miss Force's face wore a puzzled look.

"I confess myself in bewilderment," she said, when Vine paused, and seemed waiting for her to speak. "Is not energetic, wise effort for the good of others a very high plane of living? May not a society which succeeds in infusing such a spirit into its members, be justly proud of that very thing? Or do you mean that it is too much pushed; which has the effect of alienating some?"

Vine gave her head certain slow and expressive shakes, and looked troubled.

"It is not that ; I told you it was hard to put it into words ; I have no fault to find with the energy, or the amount of effort expended to catch one poor little reader ; only — Elice, the trouble lies just here ; those young ladies to whom I referred, are Christians, both of them ; pledged before the church and the world to consider first the interests of the church, so far as it represents the cause of Christ ; and I have been in their company for days together, without hearing them mention, either the church, or the Master whom they profess to serve ; without planning for a single invitation to the prayer meeting, or the Bible class ; without mentioning the fact that they were interested in the salvation of any living soul ; at the very time, too, when they were immensely interested in securing a young man, a skeptic, as a member of their local circle. I tell you, dear friend, that one third of the energy expended in coaxing people in this work, would enlist many in the army of Christ ; and it isn't done ! There is one woman in particular, who has been a trial to me in this direction, all summer. Perhaps I ought not to mention her, for there is not a direction to be mentioned in which she is not a trial to me ; she has been the thorn in my flesh in many ways since my early childhood. I wonder if you have seen her ? She is short and thick, and dresses always in the colors and style most unbecoming ; I felt almost a sense of relief when she became a

widow, because I thought she would look less hideous in black clothes, but she does not approve of mourning costumes, so continues to wear a bright green dress and a bonnet trimmed with pale blue, and much red, either in ribbons or flowers, fluttering about her ; well, that is not to the point, but I felt bound to tell you how very silly I am, so you will see just how much my criticism is worth ; this woman, Griggs, her name is, united with the Church when I was a little girl, and since the first Sabbath has not said a word to me on the subject of religion ; nor, so far as I know, to any other person. I was in her class in Sabbath school for nearly a year ; but for the last six months she has fairly haunted me about this Reading Circle. 'I don't see, Elviny, how a girl who pretends to be as fond of her books as you are, can let such a chance as this slip. When an old woman like me finds time to take hold of it and pore over their Greek and Latin books, and I dunno what not, I should think you would jump at the chance ; s'posin' you *are* studying ; land's sakes ; I'm working ! do more every day of my life than you would do in six ; yet *I* find time for reading their books ; where there's a will, there's a way ; if you would let your furbelows alone, you'd have time enough.' "

Vine broke down in a merry laugh, in which her companion joined heartily. The girl was the first to recover voice.

"Now, dear Elice, don't think I am piqued with

the woman's plainly expressed opinion ; I do not respect her sufficiently to have her opinion weigh much with me, but she illustrates my point. I don't think she is a hypocrite ; I have no right to judge her ; besides, she is like hundreds of others ; but what troubles me is, that she, ignorant woman as she is, has entered heart and soul into this circle, and is trying to use what she calls her 'influence' to extend it. Why does she feel that she is in honor bound to do so, and may yet be so silent about the one all-important theme ? Why do the most of them think the same ? One of our boarders, last summer, entertained me for hours, with the story of their efforts to organize a circle in their village ; they advertised it, and no one came. Do you imagine they gave it up ? Not they ! The three who had been here, and were interested, divided their list of acquaintances among them, and called from house to house, carefully explaining the scheme, leaving circulars, stating amount of expenditure necessary for each year, dwelling on the advantages to be secured. Next, they issued personal invitations to a gathering at the home of one of them ; had a charming little lawn tea, and some literary exercises arranged with great care, with a view to illustrating the scope of the reading ; and in short in all ways which ingenuity could devise, furthered the interest of the enterprise ; of course they were successful ; people nearly always are, when they work in that way ; the lady who was so

eloquent about it told me that one of her special satisfactions in it was, that their pastor took such an interest in it.

"Now her pastor was here, and called on a brother minister who was boarding with us ; and in the course of their conversation they compared notes as to prayer meetings. The aforesaid pastor admitted sorrowfully that his were at a very low ebb ; hardly any young people came, and but few gentlemen ; he was almost discouraged with the field, on that account. Was it possible for me to avoid questioning as to whether a tithe of the work given to the Reading Circle, would not have revived the prayer meeting?"

A little silence, broken again by Vine:

"That is by no means an isolated instance ; I hear so much about this thing ; living in the heart of it as I do. I have been simply amazed over the amount of talent expended in working up these circles. The whole force of modern machinery has been employed to increase their interest. Pulpit and press have united to push them forward. I know of a circle where a regular correspondence is kept up between other circles who chance to be honored with very gifted members.

"One person is appointed to write a letter to this particular lady or gentleman, in the name of the circle ; the letter is read to the company, before starting on its journey ; in the course of time comes a reply, charmingly written, and it, of course, is

publicly read ; you can understand how it enhances the interest. Imagine the same idea in a modified form, worked into a prayer meeting ! but who ever does it for a prayer meeting ? How many women do you know who walk four miles, of a dark evening with only a lantern and a dog for company, to attend the weekly prayer meeting ? yet a woman of fifty who has been a member of the Church of Christ for forty years, told me with great satisfaction that she had not missed a meeting of their class in two years, rain or snow, and had travelled the four miles to the village with the accompaniments which I have described ! That same woman sold a pet cow, which I fancy was needed in her home, to raise money enough to spend ten days here last summer ! I could spend the night in giving you instance after instance which has come to my knowledge of remarkable talent, and ingenuity, and self-sacrifice, expended in this cause. I have a strange feeling about it, a foolish feeling perhaps, but it humiliates me to think that professed Christians are giving themselves with such heartiness to intellectual efforts, and being apathetic in regard to the great thing."

Then a long silence fell between them ; the silver leaves whispered to one another in the moonlight, and now and then a mother-bird uttered a soft warning twitter to her little ones, and from the distant amphitheatre there floated strains of exquisite music ; for the rest, a hushed world.

"Vine," said the elder lady at last, laying her hand gently on the girl's folded ones, "it is all true, what you have said. I feel its seriousness. There are certain things to remember; words are spoken often in the quiet of confidential moments, words about this one great love, stronger if we are truly the Lord's, than any other love; efforts are made for his kingdom about which you and I hear nothing, and shall know nothing until they are revealed at last; but when all these things are taken into consideration, it is true, as you say, that there is a great, an alarming difference in our apparent zeal for the one interest, as compared with the other. I have reason to know what you mean. There was once a boy—a very remarkable boy—who had had no advantages in his early youth, and had grown hopeless of accomplishing anything in the way of acquiring an education; it was given to me to rouse his courage, and fairly start him on the road to what I believe will one day be honor, if he is still living, and working; but, though I often thought of it, I did not see my way clear to interesting him in the great subject. One day I resolved to attempt it that very evening; but so far as he and I were concerned there *were* no more evenings. Two hours after the resolve was taken, I received a telegram which sent me far away, and I never saw him again. I know nothing about him, poor fellow; whether he came in contact with some servant more faithful than I, remains,

among other solemn things, to be discovered at last. But the vivid recollection of my opportunity and my failure, helps me to keenly feel the truth of what you have been saying. Nevertheless, Vine dear, let me quote to you your own words: 'These ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other undone.' Since your eyes are so wide open, can they not see what a door of opportunity this very Reading Circle opens to those who will enter? If all these methods of work could be turned to the glory of the Master, why is not Vine Wilmeth using them to that end? If entire circles might be won for Him, why not join their ranks with this single aim put first: 'All of our circle for Christ?' Why not nail the class banner where Bishop Simpson said he would the country's flag, 'just below the cross?' Forgive me, dear, but I have had to do with so many young people, that your talk seems to me very much on a level with those who stand outside the church, looking on at the professed followers, but refusing to join their ranks because they are so lame, and halting, and feeble in their efforts to do the work assigned. I have always counseled that such ought to come inside and show us how."

"It is not quite parallel," said Vine, with a blush, and a half-conscious laugh, "because, in the church at least, people profess to be living to His glory, while this Reading Circle is at best a —"

But a soft hand was laid over her lips.

"No, little girl, I will not have you uncharitable; in the circle every honest Christian has at heart *His* glory first, though the way of working for it may be blundering indeed; or, not having as clear eyes as some, they may see but few if any ways of doing the work. It is for such as you to show us how. Join our class, Vine, and help us to use it 'In His Name.'"

CHAPTER XXIV.

A "PROVIDENCE."

THE blush on Vine's cheeks was a vivid crimson now, which spread all over her face.

"I have not made myself understood," she said earnestly; "I did not mean to stand outside and criticise in the spirit of one who believed she would do any better than the rest. I mean, simply, that these workers seem to me to have thought out some grand ways of reaching and helping others; ways which would never have occurred to me in the world, and then have stopped short of their privileges; they disappoint me, but not more than I disappoint myself."

"I understand perfectly, dear little Vine; there is solemn truth in what you have been saying; some of these ways of working could be utilized; it is your and my privilege, since they have been thought out for us, to help utilize them. I think of some things which I will do as soon as I reach home; I think of one thing which I will go to my room and do this evening. I will write to that boy; the words which I did not speak to him

years ago ; to be sure I don't know where he is, not even if he is on earth at all, now ; and he is no longer a boy, if living, but a young man, but I will 'shoot an arrow at a venture,' and see what will come of it ; and you needn't blush, nor look distressed, Vine dear, for this is a direct outgrowth of your strong little lecture to-night. Meantime, I insist that you join our class at once, and let it help you to live out your own ideas."

"How does it come to pass that yours is the class of '87," said Vine, "when you were here at the formation of the circle? I should have supposed you would have entered the ranks at once."

There was a sudden pressure of the hand which held Vine's, and Miss Force's voice, when she spoke again, trembled a little. "I did, dear, and read for two years, or more ; then a shadow of great darkness fell upon me. I buried my mother, and sister, and one strong, true friend, — my best friend, — all within a year ! It took me a long time to creep out of the darkness into God's light again ; in fact, I never did. I was utterly crushed, and helpless, and rebellious ; but, in his infinite love and mercy, he reached down after me and drew me up into the sunlight of his presence, as I had never felt it before. I joined the class of '87 for the express purpose of working in it for him ; and I thank him for putting certain words into your heart to say to-night ; they have helped me to ideas. But I don't want you to stand out-

side any longer ; come in and help us. Now let us go home ; I want to write my letter."

"I ought to be an '87," said Vine dreamily, as she slipped her hand through the other's arm, and they went down the moon-lighted avenue together. "Something should be done to signalize that year ; it has always seemed to me as though it ought to be a marked time in my life. I suppose for no more sensible reason than because I shall be exactly as old as my mother was when she was married ; and mother has told me so much about her life, that from a wee child I have had romantic ideas connected with that date." The sentence closed with a little laugh, but Miss Force did not echo the laugh. She too had had a peculiar mother, one about whom all the tender memories and fanciful dreams of childhood, clustered, and she had now only a grave. She spoke gently to Vine about the blessedness of having such a mother, and smothered in her heart the pain which throbbed, when she remembered that she counted nearly all her treasures by graves.

"I'll write a letter to your boy," spoke Vine, a few minutes later, with another little laugh, "give him a bit of advice from my wise old lips. How will that do for romance?"

"It may have a better source than romance," Miss Force said. "What if the Holy Spirit has suggested it, and will give you a message which he knows can reach a stranger, and draw him home?"

"What a solemn thing such possibilities make of life," said Vine, instantly sobered ; then, after a moment, "well, Miss Force, I will write it, just a little word, from one stranger to another. I do not even know his name ; don't tell me, please, it will seem all the more like a venture into the unknown. Will you enclose it with your letter?"

"Certainly ; but you are to remember that hardly anything is less probable than that it will ever reach his hands ; I have not the slightest clue to his whereabouts, nor existence. It is one of my regrets ; I meant to keep him in view, but, as I told you, the shadows shut down upon me so suddenly and rapidly that year."

"I know," said Vine, clasping her friend's hand in intense, silent sympathy ; she had heard something of those three graves from a friend of both.

Arrived at the cottage, Miss Force went directly to her room, "to write my letter," she said, smiling. Vine was on her way to the same work, but seeing a light in the kitchen, went thither, and found her mother washing dishes.

"Mother ! in the kitchen at this hour, and dish-washing !"

"At this hour !" repeated the weary mother, with a wan smile. "It is ridiculous, Vine, but I have been hindered all the evening, and great events have come to pass since tea."

"I should think so ! Here, give me the cloth ; sit down, mother, this minute ; I hadn't an idea of this ;

and *I've* been loitering in the moonlight this entire evening. Where is Ann?"

"Ann is seated in blissful repose on the deck of some steamer, I presume, at this moment, enjoying the moonlight. She has left us, Vine."

"Left us! To stay? What for? When did she go? Why, mother, what in the world are we to do?"

"One at a time, dear; she has been gone about an hour; the special occasion for her leaving, was, I think, because she felt too angry to stay. She has been, you know, in a chronic state of ill humor for several weeks; as to the special cause of this outburst, I was too busy, and too tired to inquire; something went wrong between her and Hannah, I believe; then I complained a little of the napkins, and that was the 'straw' too much. Never mind, Vine, more serious trials than this have been lived through."

"I know, but here it is in the very height of the season, and our house so full of boarders; and more help an impossibility! You have so much more care now than you ought to have. I don't see what we are to do."

"There will be a way provided, dear; we won't worry. Besides, I have not told you all my news; something else happened. I had a call from Mrs. Griggs."

"Poor mother!" said Vine, with a half-laugh, "all your troubles came together; I had no idea you were enduring such an evening, while I sat

mooning in the Hall. What did Mrs. Griggs want?"

"Something which I am in doubt whether to name as a special providence, or a special trial; she came a few minutes after Ann's outburst. Vine, she wants to come here."

"To come here!" repeated Vine, setting the dish she had been drying, perilously near to the edge of the table, and looking the embodiment of bewilderment and dismay. "Come where? To this house? For what? *To board?*"

"No," said Mrs. Wilmeth, laughing, "she is not in search of a boarding place; she wants to work, Vine, to come right in with us and 'take hold of things,' she says. She is not satisfied with her present management; she has very few boarders, and they are not of the 'paying sort.' They want all kinds of 'gimcracks' which she doesn't know how to make. She says she can do the substantials as well as the next one, but the fussings are for young things like you, who give their mind to them. She has an opportunity to rent her house, ready furnished, to a party of young people from Michigan, who want to keep house; and, to make her long story short, she proposes to rent it to them, if we will let her come here and 'take hold with all her might,' for good wages; she was never one of the 'stuck up' sort, she says, and if she can get a good rent for her house, and earn her living by cooking, for regular wages, instead

of getting her pay out of the small change which happens to be left after she has bought, and cooked, and done her best for a lot of 'cantankerous and disappointed boarders,' she doesn't see why she shouldn't do it. I hope you enjoy her expressive phrases, Vine, as well as I did ; it positively rested me to hear her words ; there seemed to be so much strength in them ; she is a very strong woman. Well, daughter, of course I could say nothing definite in reply ; I told her there were two of us, and we always worked together as one ; and that I should have to see her to-morrow ; what shall we say ? "

Vine was driving the last knife ; she rubbed it with slow care, as though her happiness for weeks to follow, might depend on the degree of polish which she succeeded in bestowing, and said not a word. Her mother watched her expressive face with a shade of anxiety ; but the daughter did not notice it ; she was imagining Mrs. Josiah Griggs, among the kettles and dish-cloths of that kitchen, knocking the things about in her ponderous bustling way ; displacing and disarranging all the various trim contrivances for expediting the work of the kitchen, which had been among the vigorously pushed studies of Vine's latest winter.

She heard herself spoken to a dozen times in a day in the harsh, loud voice she knew so well : " Here, Elviny, put them things away, can't you ? " " Elviny, what's to hinder your takin' hold and

makin' these cookies, instead of me takin' my time? A girl of your age ought to do all the bakin' for the hull family." She could almost hear her voice at the moment; it was so exactly like Mrs. Griggs' way of managing other people's affairs for them; it was so unlike the ways to which she was accustomed. Her mother's low-voiced "Daughter" was always music to her ears; and the girls all liked her; even Ann had rarely been cross to her. Mrs. Griggs was the only person she knew, who seemed privileged to live in a chronic state of fault-finding with her. Would it be possible to endure her presence, all day, and every day? Still, how were they to manage, else? The cook was already overworked, and the chamber-maid was good-naturedly doing more each day than properly fell to her share; Ann, despite her high temper, had been very efficient, and her place would be hard to fill, even if, during the season, it had been possible to fill it in any way. Certainly, as her mother said, there were phases about this strange proposal which seemed like a special providence; Mrs. Griggs knew how to do heavy work, and a good deal of it; and mother, *poor mother*, was overworked and very tired. She stole a glance at her as she sat in the chair where Vine had placed her; not idle; she had risen almost immediately, washed her hands at the sink, visited the refrigerator, and returned with a dish of potatoes which she was paring steadily while she talked. She looked very

pale and worn ; looking at her, Vine thought suddenly of Miss Force's mother ; and of the flower-strewn grave under a family elm, which had been described to her. She spoke suddenly : " Well, mother, I think perhaps we would better call it a providence, and try her, at least, only," and her face lighted a little with a possible hope, " there is one thing to think of, how would she and Hannah agree ? If Hannah should get vexed and leave us, we *would* be in trouble."

Mrs. Wilmeth did not know whether to smile or sigh ; she had noted the flash of hope on Vine's face.

" No," she said, gently, " Hannah and she are ' cronies,' so she says." The smile had its way, this time. " They can work together as nice as ' two pigs in a pen ;' the simile is her own, Vine."

Then mother and daughter looked at one another and laughed outright.

" Very well," said Vine, breaking off suddenly, and shutting back resolutely a little sigh, " let us try them. And now, mother, can not you go at once to bed ? I will finish those potatoes, and leave everything in order for Hannah."

" But, daughter, about this matter ; have you thought of every thing which it involves ? I am surprised that you consider it feasible even in this emergency. Ann slept across the way with her friend, you know ; but Mrs. Griggs can not be expected to do that ; and Hannah and Jane have such

a little room there is no chance to put up another bed, even if that would answer. Do you see, Vine, all that it would involve?"

No, Vine had not seen; had not thought of such a possibility. Her face paled under it, and she sat down suddenly in the straight-backed kitchen chair, her face wearing a curious, drawn look.

"She would have to sleep with me!" she gasped, rather than spoke.

"Why, not quite so bad as that, dear. We could set the cot up for her, but it would have to go in your room, I suppose; I have thought it all over, for the last hour, and I can imagine no other way. I think we shall have to dismiss the question, daughter, as among the impossibles."

And Vine took it all in, as one bitter dose. She saw the ponderous feet treading heavily on the bright rugs in her pretty room; strong hands setting the chairs with a bang on her delicate matting; slamming brush and comb among the purities of her white toilet table; Vine even thought she saw many hairs standing in frowzly snarls all around the edges of that brush, leaning over and touching with oily breath the white frills of her pin-cushion. She shivered, and looked about her for the open window whence the wind came, and wondered that the evening had suddenly turned so chilly. Her one little white room, her pretty refuge from all that jarred in her life, which was, of course, not all sunshine, for she was not a daughter who

shirked, and, in summer, the hours were full of crowding and not always congenial duties. But in her own pretty room she had given free rein to her dainty, delicate fancies, and reveled among just the tints and shapes which pleased her best. Simple, inexpensive adornments, not the less precious because they were so largely the work of her own, or her mother's hands. Vine had always, from the time she was six, and was promoted from the crib to the dignity of a little white bed of her own, in the tiny room which opened out from mother's, had this one spot sacred to herself; her own room. Even her mother, with the delicate tact which had characterized this plain, hard-working woman in the bringing up of her daughter, always knocked at this door, and awaited permission before she entered. Could Vine endure it to have Mrs. Josiah Griggs passing in and out at all hours of the day, as one who had a right there? Could she lie still under the delicate draperies of her lovely bed, and listen to the hard breathing of the ponderous form on the cot? "I almost know she snores," said poor Vine to herself, with that curious mixing of the ludicrous with the pathetic, which is an accompaniment of all excited states of nerve. "O dear! I can't, I really can't do it; mother is right; we must dismiss this thing as impossible."

"Vine," said Mrs. Wilmeth, after the silence had lasted for several minutes, during which she had finished and put away the potatoes; she came

to her daughter's side, and passed her hand lovingly over the girl's brown hair. "Vine, don't let us think of it any more; I hadn't an idea of it, daughter, really; I was surprised that you should have. It is quite out of the question, of course. I would not have your home life spoiled in any such way. Let us get to rest, dear, and don't worry. We shall see our way clearer in the morning; some way will be provided; there always is. Promise me, daughter, that you will not give it any more thought?"

Then Vine reached up and kissed her mother, — a long, clinging kiss. "I'll promise," she said, rising, and winding her arms about the mother; as she looked fondly down on her, she was a trifle the taller of the two. "It doesn't need any more thinking about, little mother; it is all thought out, and settled. I was planning where I would have the cot stand."

CHAPTER XXV.

A GREAT MANY "LITTLE THINGS."

YOU think it was a very little thing? Well, that is true enough; yet, when we stop to consider it, life, for the most part, is made up of little things. It is only the occasional which is startling in its magnitude. If one would be sympathetic with his kind, there is this thing always to remember: it is much easier to sit in a quiet room, surrounded with an atmosphere of peace, and talk about the petty trials of others, and the duty of bearing them cheerfully, than it is to belong to that other company who are at that moment in the heat of the conflict between duty and inclination.

Something of this Vine Wilmeth felt as she held herself by sheer force of will, quiet as to movement and speech, and watched the ponderous form of Mrs. Josiah Griggs coming down upon the treasured sweetnesses of her pretty room. Not absolutely quiet, either, for she made a sudden, instantly controlled movement, and shivered as though a chill had possession of her, as a tiny vase

of delicate workmanship bounced over against the small volume in brown and gold, which lay on the toilet table.

"Oh! it didn't break," said Mrs. Griggs; "you needn't jump as though you were going into a fit; it's a wonder it didn't; such a shivery little thing, no bigger than a minute. Mercy knows how you ever git dressed with so many gewgaws round! You needn't come; I'm wiping up the water all right; there wa'n't a thimble full, that's one comfort. No, it ain't hurt the book; not much, anyway. There's a blister or two on it, but they'll dry out, I guess. This table ain't no place for books; there's trinkets enough without them, mercy knows."

"Don't throw the rose away, please, Mrs. Griggs, it is a very choice variety; put it in the large vase, please, with the — why, where is the large vase?"

"I sot it out in the hall, by the door. It was dreadfully in the way last night; there wa'n't a spot to lay a thing down; I come within an inch of tipping *that* over. Flowers ain't hullsome in a bedroom, anyhow. 'f I was you, I'd git a big box somewheres, and put about a hundred of these fussy things in it, and nail 'em up, till times was easier. It's enough to make a body crazy to try to git dressed in a room where it ain't safe to lay down an apron, without being in danger of tipping over a hull wagon-full of glass and chiny things, to say nothing of tag ends of ribbons and lace

flyin' about. For my part, I don't see how folks thinks such things is neat."

The tongue was absolutely quiet, but Vine gathered herself up from what seemed to her now her only refuge, that sweet white bed, and went with swift step into the hall to recover her treasures before some ruthless hand swept them away as rubbish. She could think of no answer which was safe to make to Mrs. Griggs, so she kept silent still, but she set the offending vase on a chair close to her bedside, then took refuge once more within its folds and covered even her head, while the toilet of the other lady made swift progress. The moment the resounding slam of the door indicated a departure, Vine was on her feet, turning the key in the lock, even slipping the little bolt below the lock, as though the former were not protection enough; next she fell to a vigorous scrubbing of the pretty wash-bowl with its pale blue bands, murmuring excitedly as she rubbed: "How I am ever to endure it!"

Oh! she wasn't heroic, I admit, and there are undoubtedly heavier trials in life than hers, and I do not hold her up as a model; but such as she was, poor child, I present her to you. This was the first morning of the infliction. She did get a "big box" during that same day, and bestow within it with loving hand, certain of her most treasured "gewgaws," leaving a clearer sweep for Mrs. Griggs' heavy hands. But it was not until

the close of that long week that she presented herself with a half-laughing face, at the door of Miss Force's room, one afternoon, just as the bell was ringing for "Round Table" at the Hall.

"I am quite ready," she said meekly. "I have resolved to join the circle; I have discovered that while I have been mote-hunting among its members, there are beams enough in my own eyes to almost destroy the sight. Dear Elice, I am ashamed of all I said to you the other night; not that it is not true, but that I plainly feel now that the way to have made it less true, was to have taken hold with the others, and used *their* ways, and *my* ways, and all ways, as well as I could for "His" sake. Besides—and this is the greatest part of my discovery—it is easier to be good for others than it is for one's self. It is easier to do things which you like, and which in a sense are natural to you, than it is to do what goes utterly against the selfish side of your nature. Isn't that an original discovery? But there is an immense difference between knowing a thing and feeling it."

"Come in," said Miss Force, turning from the arrangement of her bonnet to kiss her fair guest. "I've been watching you, dear; it is the new woman, isn't it, who has been helping? Did you call it 'hindering,' little girl? I don't think it; I believe my Vine has been growing all the week."

"If you could see her heart, you would discover a whole regiment of new weeds!"

"But the heart is under cultivation. I know all about it, dear; it is easier to bear other people's petty trials than it is our own. I am glad you have decided for our class. You need not regret nor try to recall what you said the other evening; it is much truer than it ought to be. We need more wide-open eyes to see its mistakes, and take hold of them with determined hand; but, my friend, will not the work be hard for you? Much as I want you with us, would it not be better to join the Eighty-eights?"

"Oh! I have been reading the books of the course in my leisure moments, all winter. I liked to keep it so much in view; but I could not decide to join, because of the moles. Elice, there are a great many hypocrites in this world, who do not suspect that they are such!"

"That is a discovery, certainly," the elder lady said, with a light laugh; "I think I should doubt, in such cases, whether the name applied to them. I suspect you are talking about a large company of Christians, not hypocrites, who need to pray, — 'Lord, open thou our eyes.' The trouble is, we do not see our opportunities."

"But, dear Elice, that comforting thought does not apply to me; I *have* seen them, and shirked them, only I did not understand that I was doing so. It is as you said, the old foolish argument: 'If I were in the Church, I should live thus and so,' and complacently stay outside and do nothing. Isn't

it extraordinary, though, that the very woman of whom I was complaining should have been the one to give me a glimpse of myself? I don't believe I should have decided in this way if I had not been astonished over the awful trial it was to me to do even for the comfort of my own dear mother, something that I did not want to do! It makes all the difference in the world, and I did not know it. Certainly I ought to be more charitable in the future, whether I am or not."

"What we ought to be, we will be, dear. Don't you think that would be a good class motto? I do feel, Vine, that you enter the circle with widely increased responsibilities. The Great Teacher has shown you many ways of working. You have increased my sense of responsibility; I do want to work especially for his glory, dear friend, yet I am one of those who have not done it, through this channel, as I think I will in the future."

I do not suppose the general secretary of the circle, as she pushed her great book forward for Vine Wilmeth to sign, the next morning, knew what an accession of power the class of Eighty-seven was receiving; nor how much fuller would be the record of those who should eventually pass through the "golden gate" leading to the eternal city, because of that one name more. Yet I fancy there may have been eager-eyed, unseen watchers, who as they saw the tracing in firm fair hand of the pretty name, may have said, one to another:

"Look! she has entered the class of Eighty-seven! That means she is pledged to work through its channels, for the honor of our King. That means she will use its wide opportunities for gathering in a harvest for the Lord of the vineyard; for they 'Study the word and the works of God,' and always 'Keep our Heavenly Father in the midst.'"

If we could, for one day, see with spiritual vision, get a long sweep beyond these apparently narrow lives of ours, it might make a solemn difference with our next day's work.

"Mrs. Grigg's," said Vine, arresting a hurried footstep through the heated kitchen, moved by one of those sudden impulses which seem hard to understand or explain, "I have taken your advice at last; look at my badge! I am one of the Eighty-sevens."

"Well, I'm sure I'm glad to hear it," said Mrs. Griggs, giving vigorous pounds with the potato-masher. "You've been long enough makin' up your mind; you might be graduating this summer instead of just beginning; but I s'pose it's better late than never. Why you hung back so, beats me."

"Mrs. Griggs," said Vine, turning again, her dish of blackberries in hand ready for the table, mischief brimming in her eyes and sparkling in her voice, — if Mrs. Griggs' faculties had been attuned to see and hear such subtleties, — "Mrs.

Griggs, it was your influence which led me at last to fall into line."

A rarely bright look flashed for an instant over the homely, heated face of the animated potato-masher ; she laid down her implement of warfare, and turned her full gaze on Vine.

"You don't say so!" she ejaculated, each word coming out with a little explosive burst, as though it represented pent-up power. "Well, I never! Well, as I said, you've been long enough about it; mercy knows, *I* don't generally poke so about things I do. Take in them berries, quick, for pity's sake! and then fly round and help us dish up. Hannah and I ain't got but a pair of hands apiece, do our level best."

Rewards for petty sacrifices are often so slow to come that it is not uncommon for lives to pass out into the future without receiving a word or glance of recompense. But there are occasional other experiences; Vine Wilmeth's was one of the exceptions. She never forgot that breathless morning, three weeks after the new order of things. It had been a specially trying morning in her room; Mrs. Griggs had laid her hair brush, with the dreadful hairs fringing it, prone on Vine's own pretty ruffle, and had dried her hands on Vine's private towel hung in an obscure corner behind the door, and been in various ways especially aggravating; and Vine, left alone at last, had loitered over her toilet with the feeling that she could not go

down to the kitchen and receive that woman's orders and endure her ways any more. Then she had received a swift summons to her mother's room, and had found the doctor there, and her father looking troubled, and the doctor looking grave, and speaking peremptorily in answer to Mrs. Wilmeth's pitiful remonstrance that she *must* get up; that there was more to do to-day than usual, and that the cook had scalded her hand.

"You must *not* get up," had the doctor replied. "Three days of absolute rest from work and worry of every sort, and we may be able to save you from a serious illness; but if you make an effort even to give a direction to-day, I will not answer for the consequences."

Then it did seem to poor Vine as though the sun had gone out and the earth had reached up and swallowed the sky, and all its brightness and beauty. Twenty-two boarders for whom to prepare dinner, and Hannah with a scalded hand, and mother helpless and worrying! Then up rose Mrs. Josiah Griggs in her strength. "Jest you lie still and get rested; you're all tuckered out; that's what's the matter with you; and that's *all* that's the matter, if you behave yourself. I'm used to sickness; what you need is *rest*. I'll see to things myself; what's twenty-two folks to dinner, more than thirteen folks, when you get at it? and I had thirteen folks for seven weeks, and not a soul to do a stroke of work but me! What if Hannah

has scalded her hand? I haven't; neither of mine; and they both know how to work, I can tell you; there's plenty of things that even scalded hands can do. And Vine here can tend to the desserts and gewgaws—fixin' the dishes straight on the table, and the posies, and all that kind of nonsense, and we'll manage the rest; jest see if we don't."

There was a sense of reserve strength in the very loudness of her voice, that morning. And the fierce summer sun rushed toward its zenith, and the dinner-hour came and passed, and Vine reported to the anxious mother that Mrs. Griggs had been true to her word. Dinner had been prompt and perfect. One boarder had said that things tasted almost better than usual, and that that was unnecessary. And the kitchen was in order, and all arrangements made for tea, and Hannah's hand was better, and Mrs. Griggs had sent her word that she was "jest to lie still and behave herself;" that she, Mrs. Griggs, was good for dinner for twenty-two more people if they wanted it.

Three, four, even five days of fierce heat, and of enforced idleness on the part of the busy brain and hands, which were wont to direct the machinery of this household, and yet the machinery moved on; jars there were, some broken dishes, some spilled milk, of various kinds, yet, on the whole, peace, and good cooking, certainly; never better. Mrs. Griggs knew how to cook, and as to prompt-

ness, she was never behind time with anything. As for "straightening the dishes," and adding the fruit, and the flowers, Vine looked out for these, as she did for a hundred other little wearing cares about which she said nothing to her mother. *Her* room was kept dark, and cool, and quiet ; only the pretty and entirely successful results of each day's strain were allowed to go up to help rest her. On the fifth night came a shower, and the morning dawned cool and refreshing ; the unprecedented "warm wave" was over. Mrs. Wilmeth, with the doctor's permission, sat up in her chair, even crept down stairs, late in the afternoon, to find all the machinery still moving swiftly and well.

"How shall I ever thank you?" she said heartily to Mrs. Griggs ; "you have done everything for me. I feel all made over with this complete rest ; and Vine says you have kept everything exactly as it should be."

"I don't want no thanks," said Mrs. Griggs, in grim satisfaction ; "I'm used to work, and I know how to do it. As for the table, I didn't pay much attention to that ; Hannah and I, between us, got the things ready to eat, and Elviny seen to the fussin' part—about havin' them the right shape, and triangle, and all that nonsense. Elviny's more of a girl than a body would suppose she could be, with all the coddling she's had in bringing her up."

Vine told some of her grateful thoughts over to her friend Miss Force, in characteristic fashion :

"I cleared off my own little pine-cone bracket for her brush and comb, this morning, Elice, and I made her a present of the perfumed soap she likes so much, out and out. And I've decided that she may snore like a porpoise every night, if she feels like it; I shall be grateful to her, forever, all the same. Elice," with a sudden tightening of her hand on the elder lady's wrist, "I believe these five days of rest have saved mother's life; and she would not have rested if Mrs. Griggs had not been here. Her mind couldn't have rested, you know; and I *almost* had her not come!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

HOME.

THE door of Dr. Decker's consulting office was ajar, and four gentlemen were within in earnest conversation. Some one entered the reception room, and a murmur of voices reached to the office. Dr. Decker turned his head in that direction. "What is it, daughter?" he asked.

"It is nothing, papa, except that I want to see Dr. Kelland a moment when he is at leisure." It was Miss Nettie Decker's voice. The younger of the two physicians who were sitting beside the table, arose and stepped to the door.

"I will be at your service in five minutes more," he said, and returned.

"Did I disturb a solemn council?" Nettie asked, when the five minutes were over, and he had joined her in the family sitting-room. "I did not mean to speak a word, only to ask James if you were in, but papa is so quick to hear *our* voices; doctors are always in council, and one has to interrupt if one is ever to speak."

"The business was quite over; your conscience

need not trouble you in the least. What is there I can do for you?"

"Why, I want your company, if you can spare the time. I want to meet the six-forty train with the carriage; papa said he could spare that, but not himself, and Robert is away, you know. I could go alone with the driver, of course, but I don't want to; it happens to be an occasion on which I would like to put on all the proprieties possible."

The doctor looked at his watch and at his memorandum, inquired as to the amount of time which would probably be involved in carrying out her "proprieties," and declared himself entirely at her service for the hour.

"I have to be explicit as to hours and minutes, you know," he said, with an apologetic smile.

"I know; I have not been brought up as a doctor's daughter without learning some things, only I don't think you physicians are ever very explicit; as a rule, you have no hours except for sick people. Winter, I'm glad you are a doctor, and I'm glad papa is. It seems to me I would not have him otherwise for the world; but all the same, I am quite equally glad that Robert is a lawyer. Can you understand that state of mind?"

"Of course; it is on the principle that if all men were physicians, your father and I would have no patients on which to practise." After which he went merrily away.

"Winter Kelland, M. D." No, he was not used to it; the cards which bore the words had still a strange fascination for his eyes. He had not been so long graduated that the glamour had worn from them. There were leisure moments when it seemed almost a dream to this young man that the years of hard preparation were well over, and he had won an honorable title. In point of fact, he had been legitimate owner of the title but seven weeks. Long weeks they seemed, to look back upon, so much of life had been crowded into them; but in passing, they had seemed to be on wings. The young man will always remember it — that warm evening, with the smell of summer in all the dewy air, and the lights of the city gleaming upon him from a hundred eyes, as the train entered the familiar depot. The exhilaration of triumph which had upborne him throughout the long journey, with the coming of evening and weariness, had subsided. It was the time for him to realize vividly that he was alone. Neither mother nor father, nor kindred of any name, to watch eagerly for his triumphant home-coming. Home! Why should he use that word? In point of fact, he had no *home*. The old room at Mrs. Tryon's would be ready, he had no doubt, to receive him, but a faint smile which was almost the synonym for a tear, was on his face as he thought of what a strange sort of home it was. He had been more than two years away in the distant college which had

been Dr. Decker's choice. He had had an exceptionally brilliant career there, made exceptional by the intensity of his application, his thorough preparation beforehand, and his utter passionate absorption in whatever pertained to his profession. Dr. Decker had kept himself in regular communication with his student through the years; had been in all respects, so far as helpfulness went, as good a father as a young man need desire. And a more grateful young man than Winter Kelland it would be hard to imagine. Not the less grateful because the pecuniary part of the helpfulness had been a thorough business transaction; a debt which he had bound himself in honor to discharge as the years went by, and he prospered as he seemed not for one moment to doubt that he would. Nevertheless, he was well aware that few men would have trusted him as Dr. Decker had. He was equally well aware that he had been helped in a hundred ways which no money would ever repay. Grateful? He meant that a life-time of eager return in all possible ways should show something of what he felt. Yet, as the train neared the depot, the loneliness grew upon him. The past quite over, now, the business tie between them was broken.

It had been understood, of course, that the young man should begin life for himself from the hour of his graduation. The utmost that Dr. Decker had said about it of late was embodied in that one sen-

tence: "As to the future, my advice to you would be, to begin in this city, where you have already a name with the leading physicians, and where my influence will be of more or less help to you; but the world is wide, and you will wish, of course, to choose for yourself."

The young doctor knew the sentence by heart; it had seemed to him a sort of severing of the former relationship. He had, in his reply, meekly expressed gratitude for the suggestion, and said he should like, of all things, to begin in that city, since Dr. Decker approved. And then he had added the probable date of his arrival, calculating it carefully, in the hope that the doctor might notice it as being the evening before the annual gathering of certain physicians of rank, in his private office, and send him a card of admission; but Dr. Decker had not done so.

As the train moved more and more slowly, and the engine-bell rang out its steady warning, and the brakeman called out familiar street-crossings, indicating that the Central Station was near at hand, Winter wondered whether he should go at once to Mrs. Tryon's, taking the risk of his old room being vacant, or whether he should stop at a hotel for the night; it was quite past Mrs. Tryon's hour for supper, and probably he must be hungry, though it seemed to him that he could eat nothing. If only he had made one friend while he was in the city, a friend sufficiently interested to

meet him at the depot, what a different feeling he should have about getting in! Then he fell to wondering, for the twentieth time, whether he should stay on with Mrs. Tryon. How would his name look on her side door: "Winter Kelland, M. D." Mrs. Tryon would like it, he thought, and the boarders would, and it would doubtless be as good a neighborhood as any for a poor doctor to start out in life. He would wait, though, and ask Dr. Decker's advice. Then he wondered when he should see Dr. Decker, and whether he should venture to call the next day, or whether he ought to wait until the council was over. And then it had become quite dark, and the train had made a halt in the depot. He remembered how he had almost stumbled from the platform, dazzled by the sudden glare of light, and how, the next second, a firm hand grasped his own, and a hearty voice said, "Welcome home, my boy. Where are your checks? Here, Thomas, take these; come this way, Kelland." And, bewildered, silent, almost trembling, he had followed Dr. Decker's quick steps around the platform, to where stood the Decker carriage, with the old coachman John grinning at him from the driver's seat, and had managed to step in, with the help of the doctor's motioning hand, and had been whirled down the street, saying nothing the while beyond the merest commonplaces in answer to the doctor's questions, blundering even over these, as though he had lost the power to express

himself in the simplest ways. Then the familiar house, well-lighted, had appeared to him, and he had stumbled up the steps, after the doctor, to the brightly-lighted hall, and had shaken hands with Mrs. Decker, and Miss Nettie, and Miss Sate and kissed "the baby," who was now a pretty girl of five, and had been hurried in to dinner, and when fairly seated with the family, Nettie had said, "Sate, it seems just as though we had a 'truly' brother, and he had come home." And then every vestige of the homeless young man's composure had deserted him, and he had felt in haste for his handkerchief, and not found it in time to rescue a great tear which would roll straight down his nose!

What a time it had been! All through the bewilderments and excitements of the next day, he remembered every moment of every hour. He had not been formerly "invited" to the council. But he had been seated in the doctor's office when several of the members arrived, and had been introduced as "Dr. Kelland, gentlemen." And then each one had been formally named to him, and he had been asked to supply them with paper and pencils, not as though he were a guest, but as one of the hosts; throughout the busy, exciting day, he had been constantly appealed to as one who belonged to the establishment, so that he might almost have felt that he had dropped into his old place at Dr. Decker's right hand, but for this as-

tounding difference : the doctor never once addressed him without that bewildering prefix, and he appealed to him several times as an authority in regard to the deliverances of certain recent text books ; at least, that is about as much of the difference as could be put into words, but it was simply amazing, the many nameless ways which Dr. Decker had of making this young fledgeling feel that he belonged.

They sat late in council, having dined together, of course, at Dr. Decker's. None of them spent the night ; time was very precious with each ; but several of them took the two o'clock train, so that it was nearly morning when the doctor, with his hand on Winter's shoulder, said : " Well, good-night, my boy ! this has been a hard day. To-morrow we will sleep as late as circumstances will admit, and after breakfast I should like a little friendly talk with you." And then Winter had gone back to the elegant room which he had occupied, apparently as a matter of course, the night before.

The " friendly talk " in the morning had extended over the greater part of the day, having been subject to dozens of interruptions. What was actually *said*, when they were quite alone, might have been compressed into a few minutes of time. It closed on this wise : " Well, so you are quite willing to settle down here, and take hold of whatever you find, and what I can, by degrees, put into your hands - "

"That is not the way to put it, sir ; I can never be grateful enough for your goodness in being willing to help me get started, after all the rest."

"Then we are all right ; I declare, it is three o'clock already ! I don't know what becomes of the time to-day. I want you to go with me to see a patient on Greene Street, but first come to the door and tell me how you like my new sign. It has just been set up since dinner ; the lettering is Nettie's taste, and I rather like it."

And then it had gleamed upon him in green and gold, — "Norman Decker, M. D.," and just below it, "Winter Kelland, M. D. Office hours : etc. etc."

"I had to guess at the office hours," said the doctor, talking rapidly to cover Winter's silence and his own emotion, "but I thought they would, on the whole, be the most convenient for you. It will be much better, I think, for you to join our family for the present. We can work together to better advantage ; I need your help, my boy. I've been waiting for it for years."

And then he had ordered the carriage immediately, and they had plunged into a whirl of work and care together, with no time for sentiment ; now it was seven weeks afterwards, and at times it almost seemed to the young doctor as though he had always been Dr. Decker's associate. And now he was seated in the family carriage with Nettie, on their way to meet the six-forty train.

It was very pleasant, this having been adopted by the entire family, and called upon for family service as though he were indeed a brother. "I have always wanted a brother," Nettie had said, heartily, one day, when she asked his help.

Winter liked the position, and felt no disposition to quarrel with the nearer friend "Robert," who was frankly quoted before him as though, since he had been received as one of the family circle, there was no reason to hide from him other relations which were one day to be entered upon.

"*He* is not a brother," said Winter, complacently, to himself, thinking matters over carefully; "and I like being a brother. I don't know how people ever care for any pleasanter relation than that." By which you will understand that the young doctor had some things to learn.

During the somewhat long ride to the lower depot, Nettie explained her mission: "It is a scheme of our class. You remember I talked *our class* to you when I was at home years ago, on vacation? Well, it is our class still; I haven't graduated yet. School duties pressed me so that I had to give up the regular reading; then there were some things about the Ivy Circle of which I did not quite approve, so, all things considered, I dropped it. When I came home last fall, I determined to organize another class, on a basis which suited me, and start afresh; so we did: we belong to the class of '87. We have a large circle, and real splendid

meetings. You ought to want to belong to such a circle as this is, for the purpose of helping us ; then I am not absolutely sure but we could, in some ways, help you. The features to which I specially objected in the Ivy Circle are eliminated from this. Moral worth is the only criterion of membership ; social distinctions based on position, or money, are utterly ignored, as they should be among people who have self-respect. I want to tell you about this girl we are going to meet. She is in the Dunbar Street telephone office ; a bright, pretty girl, young, and quite alone here ; came out West with a brother, and he died a few months afterwards. She has been here at work for two years, and did not know intimately a dozen people, up to the time when we coaxed her into our circle. She lives in a dreary boarding-house, and used to have some of the most desolate evenings which could be imagined. We are trying to brighten them in every imaginable way ; one way, and one of the best, is to get her to help brighten other desolate lives.

“ To-night, though, we have a lovely scheme on hand : we always notice birthday anniversaries in some simple manner, not always by gifts, but with a little festivity of some sort ; on this occasion, seven of the members were so good as to have their birthdays come this month, and the particular young woman you and I are going to meet, starts out on her twentieth year to-morrow ; so

to-night is the celebration for the seven. She has been away for her month's vacation. For once, we have been quite reckless of expense ; have planned a lovely little supper gotten up in real elegant style, in the private parlor belonging to the W. C. T. U., on Portland Street. We have recitations instead of toasts, and flowers, and all festive things, and present each of the seven with two tickets for the Oratorio to-morrow evening. Isn't it particularly delightful that only one of the seven would dream of getting to the concert but for this ? Now, each can go and take a friend. That is papa's plan ; he is especially charmed with the entire programme. He says he is forcibly reminded of a birthday party which aunt Nettie made for him, once upon a time. Doesn't it seem comical to think of any person planning an entertainment for papa's sake—to try to help him ? But he says it would never be possible for him to tell how much it helped him."

"I can imagine it," her companion said, with shining eyes ; "I can imagine it very much better than you can."

CHAPTER XXVII.

CIRCLES WITHIN CIRCLES.

AND then they had reached the depot, and were just in time for the lonely young girl, a trifle red-eyed from recent weeping, who stepped timidly on the platform as soon as the train came to a full stop.

Quite alone, she was, in the crowded city. During the greater part of the day there had been with her a young woman who used to be in the same telephone office, but who had been transferred down town. These two were not friends, but knew each other well enough to exchange friendly words together and to be glad that they had chanced to meet on this journey back from vacation, so making the way less dreary. The down-town girl was less homesick than this one; she was coming back to friends who would be glad to welcome her.

As the train neared the city, the two had questioned each other as to plans. The down-town girl was going to stop at the Fleet Street Crossing; that was nearer her boarding-house than any other.

No, she was not going to take an omnibus. O, yes! she would be afraid to walk the streets alone, at least she would not like to do it, not in that part of town, but her friend Kate Greene, and Kate Greene's brother, were coming to meet her. And a little pink had flushed into her cheek at mention of the brother, which was becoming; a little later she had exclaimed joyously,—

“There they are!” and had bowed, and smiled, and the pink had deepened, and the lonely girl had seen a trim-looking young man in a gray suit, spring deftly on the platform, while the train was still moving, and her companion had said to her with a kindly nod, “Well, good-by! I suppose I shall see you sometime. What a long journey it is from your office to ours! I hope you will get home safe to-night; good-by!” and she had flitted away under the protection of the gray coat, leaving the deserted one to feel more desolate than before.

Then the Central Station had been called, and she had stepped timidly out on that platform, resolved to sacrifice twenty-five cents and take an omnibus, rather than walk alone through the crowded streets.

And the next second some one had spoken her name, and taken her cordially by the hand, as though she were actually being waited for, and had introduced her to a tall gentleman: “Dr. Kelland, Miss Porter.” And the said Dr. Kelland

had possessed himself of her check and number, issued his orders about her one little trunk, and seated both ladies in a carriage which seemed also to be in waiting, before the bewildered young woman could gather her wits sufficiently for a demur.

The mistress of ceremonies chattered gayly on, leaving her companion time to recover from bewilderment.

"You didn't expect a delegation to meet the train, did you? Bless your heart, do you suppose our circle intends to let any of its members come dolefully back from their vacation in solitude? Besides, isn't it your birthday frolic? *We* have not forgotten it if you had; you will find us all ready. How many minutes will you need at your room for brushing your hair, and shaking off the dust? That is all which will be necessary. It isn't a dress parade, you know; we allow nothing of that sort. Dr. Kelland, is this the house? Now, Fanny, you may have fifteen minutes to wash and brush, then we'll drive directly to the rooms."

"Isn't it nice?" she said gleefully, going back to the phraseology of her childhood, as Dr. Kelland, having rung the bell for his lady and waited until she was admitted, came back to the carriage. "I have quite looked forward to this evening; it is going to be beautiful, I know; she will not feel so much alone after to-night. First nights from home are always so dreary! I wish you had time

to see our parlor, Doctor. It is decorated with flowers, pansies, of course, and they are arranged in exquisite designs. The word WELCOME is made out of them, glowing in a bank of white, and the magic figures 1887, also done in pansies, look beautiful."

"Why pansies more than any other flower, and why is the year '87 especially magic?"

Nettie exclaimed in indignation:

"Only hear him! The ignorance of the man, when I have done my best to teach him! Don't you know that *ours* is the *Pansy Class*, and that we are all to graduate in the summer of '87?"

"I know as little about it as possible. A reading circle of some sort I *have* heard hinted at, several times in my life, but of its peculiar features I have, for reasons which I seemed unable at one time to control, remained profoundly ignorant. I think I believe in it more fully to-night than I ever did before; at least, in your branch of it. Do you undertake much work of the sort you are doing to-night?"

"We are bound in honor to undertake all manner of work which will develop the spirit of Christian love and fellowship; it is the central feature of our organization. Robert is especially fertile in schemes; I wish he were here to-night; much of this planning is his own. Robert has been connected with these circles since their first inception years ago, and has worked them always with a view

to reaching hearts as well as intellects. Why don't you join us, Dr. Kelland?"

"I never tried harder to do anything than I did to join the circle of which you were once a member."

"I know; but surely that feeling is unworthy of you."

"It was," he said frankly; "I have lived to be ashamed of it, and have lost it, but I have also lost my interest, or had, until to-night. I like this sort of thing. I believe I could take hold with anybody who would reach after lonely people and try to help them. I thought I had not time, but I don't know."

"It does not take much time; the regular reading is not heavy, and much of it would be familiar ground to you. By the way, have you looked at the book I lent you last week?"

"Not yet," he said, coloring slightly. "I will, as soon as I can spare the time, because I promised you; but," — a moment's hesitation, and then he added frankly, — "it will bore me, I know; all works of that character do."

"Of what character?"

"The semi-religious."

"It is not semi-religious; it is wholly so, and argumentative, and well-written. I have heard eminent scholars say so. What papa admires, Dr. Kelland, need hardly bore you."

He colored again. "That is true, in a sense,"

he added, after a moment's pause, "and yet, his tastes in this direction may not be mine ; I may not be cultivated up to the point where I can enjoy them."

"That is true, Dr. Kelland ; truer than you think. You want a cultivation of heart which will let you enjoy all these things ; it is an infinite pity that you are not a Christian. Of all professions, that of a physician should be walled in with prayer."

"Why ? Do you consider it such a dangerous profession ?"

"Dangerous ! Imagine me, Dr. Kelland, in mortal agony, you standing over me conscious that your poor human powers can do nothing for me ; that I am going swiftly away, and you, on whom I had placed my trust, can give me no help about the journey."

"But, Miss Decker, even in that case I might have done all that could be done. Of course there is a point where the physician stands helpless."

"But there *ought not* to be ! My father never stands helpless before a dying bed ; he knows the way so well, that he can point it out unerringly in a moment ; and he knows the Physician into whose hands he must commit the case, has never lost one which was fully entrusted to him. I *wish* you were a Christian, Dr. Kelland."

The conversation had taken a most unexpected, and, to Winter, an embarrassing turn. He was glad that the "brushing" was at that moment concluded,

and the young girl's return made an answer unnecessary. Still it was not easy to get away from the thoughts which had been stirred ; they haunted him during his ride back to Dr. Decker's.

This young lady who had adopted him as a brother, had spoken some very plain words, certainly. If their inference was correct, he was not prepared to rise to the heights of his profession, and it was to this that his ambition reached. Could it be possible that a doctor was in honor bound to know something about the other world as well as this ? But what utter nonsense, when it was not possible for any person to know certainly of the things concerning any other world ! The moment, however, he had made this statement to himself, he realized that Nettie Decker would have declared it false. She believed that *she* knew about that other world ; she believed her father knew. Were they right, and was he wrong ? The young doctor moved restlessly on his seat and wished this ride were at an end, that he might plunge into work and forget uncomfortable thoughts.

He found Dr. Decker waiting for him. Could he go to the hospital with him at eleven o'clock ?

Dr. Kelland shook his head. " I'm afraid I can't, Doctor. I wanted to ask you to go with me to Mrs. Tryon's ; that poor fellow is much worse. He has only volunteer nursing, you know, and I have promised to spend the night with him, since it is such a critical time. I am due there at ten o'clock,

and shall hardly be able to get away ; there is nobody whom I can trust."

When he went to his room to make preparation for the night, before him on the toilet table lay the book he had neglected. It recalled Nettie Decker's words. He felt very uncomfortable. Here was he on his way to pass the night with a dying man, and, according to this plain-spoken girl, he was by no means prepared to do his whole duty in the case. He had depended on Dr. Decker's presence part of the time. Was it true that while he trusted his medical knowledge of the case in hand, perfectly, he yet needed Dr. Decker, so that conscience might be entirely clear? It was a humiliating admission, certainly ; he was by no means ready to make it.

"She is a grand girl, though," he said, as he rearranged his medicine case. "If I had had such as she to have given me a lift, I wonder if I would have been better furnished? I had *lifts*, certainly, but they were not in her direction. I wonder what is become of the boy who gave me the little book? How long I carried that book! I believe I fancied it a sort of talisman. I wonder what has become of Miss Force? I should like to see her again, and thank her for my mental uplift. What a thing she did for me, without knowing it! Wait! That reading circle about which she was fond of talking—I wonder how wide this scheme is which Miss Decker is pushing? The same general ideas seem to govern them of which I heard,

or imagined I heard, long ago. Miss Force told about a summer school in connection with it — and Miss Decker, the other night, spoke of the same. Now I think of it, the boy on the fence referred to some such place. Wouldn't it be a remarkable coincidence if all these links belonged to the same chain? Where is that card, I wonder, or circular, or something of the sort, which Miss Nettie gave me a few days ago? I hadn't time to look at it; ah! here it is. A four-years course? Yes; here are the books required for each year, and the books which have been required in the past; how long a 'past' has it?"

He ran his eye eagerly back over the years, and a curious, almost a stifling sensation came over him as he read the familiar name: "Human Physiology, by J. Dorman Steele." The very book to which he could distinctly trace back the steps which had set him where he was to-night!

"Upon my word," he said, with a queer smile on his face, "I belong to their circle by the very force of necessity! A foundling, adopted and educated without knowing it. This is tremendous! Where's that book? I'll read it to-night; poor Jarvis will sleep most of the time, I fear; even before he begins his last sleep. I'll join the class of '87; why not? I can make up a year's reading. Hold on! Weren't those the figures I marked out on a tree, once upon a time? As sure as I am the same person, that's the very date — 1887.

I can see it now. *My little Vine!* and the baked potatoes; how long, long, *long* they have waited! Well, the world is very much smaller than I thought it! See here, Dr. Kelland, it is nearly ten o'clock; you must go at once."

In the hall below Dr. Decker was standing, ready to start out on a night of work.

"Do you say Jarvis is not likely to get through the night?" he asked. "Poor fellow! I'll look in if I can, my boy. Are you willing to have him slip away from you without being able to say a word to light up the darkness? It is a very dark journey without Christ. I *wish* you knew him."

A whole world of emphasis thrown into that word "*Wish*." Why should Dr. Decker say such words to him to-night of all nights?

He passed on with no reply other than a respectful bow, and opened the door of the little room where sat the bell-boy, a younger brother of the one whom he used to relieve; that one had been promoted: he was the hostler now.

"Jimmy," said Dr. Kelland, "when John brings in the eleven o'clock mail I wish you would scamper around to 14 Bond Street to me with it; I expect something of importance to which I want to make a reply to-night," and he slipped a shining quarter into the boy's hand to refresh his memory. Now he was ready for his night's work.

A very quiet night it seemed prepared to be. The tired young man who was volunteer nurse

was glad to see him, and reported that there had not been much to do but shade the light and keep still ; for the most part, the sick man slept quietly.

“Too quietly,” said the doctor with a sigh, as he turned from the bed and took his seat by the shaded lamp. He had brought the book to review, in order that he might keep his promise to Miss Decker — “The Philosophy of the Plan of Salvation.” He read the title with a half-smile.

“I must read it for another reason, I suppose,” he said, “if I am really going to join that circle ; but I suppose they do not quarrel with a man’s belief because it happens to differ from theirs. I’m probably as sincere in mine as they are in theirs, and that is the important thing, after all. If I live what I believe, and believe what I live, what more can be expected?” Saying which, he opened the book at absolute random, and read with slow care the first words which presented themselves. They were these :

“Perhaps the most absurd and injurious adage that has ever gained currency among mankind is, that ‘it is no difference what a man believes, if he only be sincere.’ Now the truth is, that the more sincerely a man believes falsehood, the more destructive it is to all his interests, for time and eternity. This statement can be confirmed in every mind beyond the reach of doubt.”

“Upon my word,” said the reader, with a sudden paling of his face, “if I were a believer in

something or other, I should feel that the powers of earth and air were combining around me to-night. What a remarkable thing that I should read just that sentence instead of any other! I wonder if the entire book is going to jam into a man's prejudices in that fashion? Still, Winter Kelland, you must read it in order to be honest; and whatever else you may be, you are honest."

So saying, he turned with a resolute air to the first page. But he was by no means in so light-hearted a mood as he tried to fancy himself. The circumstances by which he was surrounded were solemn and depressing. Yonder on the bed, the first case he had lost, was slipping steadily away, already gone beyond his grasp. Aside from the sense of failure as a physician, there were sad features connected with it. It was the young man of the waxed mustache, who had questioned Winter's right to a seat at the first table; though this, of course, the young doctor did not know. The acquaintance then commenced, had continued in much the same fashion through the years—a speaking acquaintance only; yet Winter, with the sense of long association strong upon him, felt as though his patient was, in a sense, a friend. He had done his utmost for the poor fellow, not trusting to his own skill, but had once and again called Dr. Decker to the rescue, and had been assured by that high authority that nothing which his knowledge could suggest had been left untried; and the result

had been failure. A lonely dying bed it was. No relative or near friend at hand. There was a widowed mother, old, and feeble, and far away, too feeble to make the long journey, had there been time, too poor to come had she been summoned, but not too old or too poor to suffer. It was all very sad.

At precisely fifteen minutes after eleven, Jimmy appeared with the expected letters — two of them ; but the sleeper at that moment stirred on the bed, and opened his eyes : rational eyes, for the first time in many hours. Winter laid the letters down hastily and went to him.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A NIGHT FOR DECISIONS.

AM I going to die ? ”
These were the first solemn words which confronted the watcher. He waived them for the time being, by administering the medicine, by moistening the patient's lips, and wiping the cold sweat from his forehead ; but the question came again, faintly, yet distinctly, “ Am I going to die ? ”

“ Whatever else I may be, I am honest.”

The doctor had said this to himself not an hour before. Here was a chance to test it. Could he practise dishonesty in this presence ?

“ My poor fellow ! ” he said gently, “ we are doing all we can for you. Dr. Decker has been to see you twice, and is coming again to-night.”

“ Am I going to die ? ”

A low, hollow voice, great solemn eyes looking at him as if they would read his soul. There was no escape ; he must say as tenderly as he could, “ I'm afraid, Jarvis — ” and then stop ; he could not speak the word.

What next ?

Not certainly the thing which Dr. Kelland had expected ; he was not very familiar with death-beds, though he had stood beside Dr. Decker at one or two. But Dr. Decker was not present now ; the responsibility was his own. The question came as distinctly and solemnly as before :

“ Can you pray ? ”

Dr. Kelland felt a cold shudder run through his frame. Here he was at last, confronted with something which he could not do. Something which others, hundreds of them, with only a tithe of the knowledge which he possessed, could do. O, for Dr. Decker now !

“ We are doing all we can for you, poor fellow ! ”

How his own words came back on him to-night ! He had just used them, and they were not true. Here was something which was wanted, with mortal need, and the young man bending over the bed felt that he could no more do it than he could hold back that rapidly ebbing life.

“ My father never stands helpless before a dying bed.”

Such were the words Nettie Decker had spoken to him that evening, and only a little later her father had said, “ My boy, are you willing to have him slip away from you without being able to say a word to light up the darkness ? ”

How was he to bear this ? He had not expected consciousness again.

“ When will Dr. Decker come ? He can pray.”

Yes ; there it was ! Winter Kelland with all his brilliant education, his rare opportunities for culture, was confronted by his first serious case, and was a failure ! There was no denying the humiliation of it, but the pain of refusing a request from the dying was the greater burden now. If only he had retained Jimmy, so he might send for Dr. Decker at once, or for a minister ; if there were a minister within call. He looked around for the bell with which he was to summon help when needed, but at that moment there were footsteps outside, and a soft tapping at the door, then Mrs. Tryon opened it and peeped in.

“I’ve just got away from aunt Charlotte,” she murmured ; “she is very poorly to-night. Is there any change here ?”

She looked unusually old. She wore a dark wrapper, and was collarless ; her gray hair had slipped down on one side, and was straggling about her ear, but the eyes of the sick man fastened upon her, and his hollow voice spoke, —

“Mrs. Tryon, can you pray ?”

She gave the doctor a startled, inquiring look, but he bowed gravely. “Certainly,” the bow said, “he is quite himself.” Then the gray-haired, collarless woman bent over him.

“Poor fellow ! O, yes ! I can *pray* ; I couldn’t have lived through all my trials if I hadn’t known how. Do you want us to kneel right down here and pray for you ?”

She was on her knees before the nod of assent was given, and the doctor dropped beside her, hardly knowing what he did in the intense excitement of the moment. O, yes! she knew how to pray, this uncultured woman. How she poured out her soul for the dying man! Simply, as a child might have spoken, but with the assurance also which a child would have in going to a father in whom she had unbounded confidence. What a blessed thing it was for the graduated physician of whom his college president had said he was "destined for a brilliant future," that the Widow Tryon knew how to pray!

Young Jarvis did not die that night; he dozed again presently, and Mrs. Tyron went away, and the doctor went back to his letters. They were disturbing. Matters had gone wrong with a fellow graduate, and Winter was powerless to help him. Death had come to close the prospects of another.

"Death everywhere," murmured Winter, with almost a groan, "and I am afraid poor Grahame was not ready for it; I wonder if there was anybody to pray?" Then he looked at the other letter. Both handwriting and postmark were entirely unfamiliar to him, yet the letter commenced:

MY DEAR FRIEND WINTER:

Have you ever read the story of the man who "shot a bow at a venture"? This is what I am about to do, troubled all the time by the humiliating recollection that I had ample opportunity to

aim surely, and did not. Do you remember, I wonder, that morning years ago when I stood at the gate and talked with you? As I turned away, I said to myself: "To-night I will have an earnest talk with him." But long before night I was far away. I think I helped you a little about the arithmetic, Winter, and the algebra, but I let the vastly more important matter "slip." I did not mean to; even after I went away, I meant surely to write to you and put into words the desire of my heart to see you a student of Christ's. But I did not; the shadows fell thick around me. When our old friend Miss Putnam went home so suddenly, my only sister was lying very ill. She died not long afterwards of the same disease which took from me my mother. I heard, through Miss Putnam's nephew, her "dear Don," what a true and valued friend you were to her, and to him, to the last; and I thought, when my heart felt a little less sore, and my body was a little rested from the strain which had been upon me for so long, I would write that letter to you; but I did not. The weeks went by, and another shadow, deeper than any before, fell upon me. I do not know, Winter, whether you ever heard of the death of her "dear Don." If you had, you would not have known that my life seemed to have died with him. I was to have been married to him, Winter, in another year. Well, I lost you after that. I may have lost you forever; I do not know what the years have done to you, I do not know if you are still on the earth,—yet I venture, after all this space, to take up my neglected duty and try to gather its raveled threads. There is but *one thing* I want to say.

Then had followed such an appeal as Winter had hardly imagined could be written: that if he were still unacquainted with the Great Teacher, he would apply to Him at once for the only true wisdom.

Long before he reached the close of the closely-written pages, Winter knew, of course, that the name signed would be, Elice Force. He read

slowly, carefully, with an absorbed attention which the events of the night had helped to deepen.

"How strange!" he said aloud, as he at last laid down the paper, "how *strange* that this letter should have reached me to-night!"

There had lain inside a card of delicate tint, and with a faint perfume of violets hovering about it. Winter had not noticed it at first, but in taking up the envelope he felt it. The perfume, by that subtle law which we only half-understand, carried him instantly back to the days of his childhood. He drew out the card and examined it carefully; It was closely written.

MY STRANGER FRIEND:

For you are my friend, though a stranger, because my Elder Brother is interested in you, and wants to serve you. He has commissioned me to-night to write this little card of invitation. - If you have not yet decided the question, He wants me to ask you, again, to come home. He has sent you many invitations, and I do not know but it may be you have slighted them, many do, strange as it may seem, for He invites to the palace of the King, and has made royal preparations for his guests. I want to meet you there; I do not know your name; Miss Force did not tell it to me at first, and then I asked her not to, so that you might feel I knew you as little as you did me, and yet that we were to be friends forever in our Father's house. I am going; I should like to make your acquaintance there. How shall we know each other? I cannot tell, but perhaps the Lord Christ who knows us both so well, and who knows about this, which I am writing you, will say to you: "Yonder is the woman who in the year 1884 gave you that invitation hither." If He does, you will come, it may be, to me and say: "You see I accepted the invitation, and am come home." Then we will talk it all over. I do not expect to meet you until then, but really and truly I shall look for you when I get home.

GOOD-BY!

And then the sick man had stirred again, and needed attention, — needed much attention for the next hour, and wanted Mrs. Tryon, and she came, and talked low, soothing words to him, on her knees ; and he dozed again, and wakened, and was cared for tenderly ; and Dr. Decker stole in on tip-toe and whispered, after a few minutes of watchfulness, that he thought the patient would live through the day — the gray dawn of the morning was now breaking — and that one of the hospital attendants had come with him and could stay for a few hours, and that he, Winter, would better go home and get some rest, for it was going to be a hard day.

So Winter in the growing light gathered up his letters and went home ; went to his room and locked his door, but did not go to sleep. He got through with that day, and the next ; busy, wearing days they were, and poor Jarvis was still living.

On the evening of the third day, as the doctor stood just at sunset alone with him, he bent over the bed, with his hand on the slowly-sinking pulse, and said, low and gently, “ Jarvis, my dear fellow, I can pray with you now.”

Something very like a flash lighted for a moment the dying eyes, and the voice said distinctly :

“ That is good ; it is good to know how to pray. I’ve been thinking I’m so glad my old mother knows how. I am glad, too, Doctor, that you haven’t waited till you lie where I do. Mine’s a wasted

life ; it was wonderful in Him to accept it, but He did. It is wonderful to think of going home : I've wanted all summer to go home to mother, you know, but I never thought of this other home. He planned it ; I shouldn't wonder if mother would be coming very soon. Doctor, I'm glad you can pray ; speak a few words for me now, won't you ? ”

And Doctor Kelland knelt by his dying patient and offered his first prayer in the hearing of other ears than God's. A hard struggle he had been through. He felt older by years than on the first night he had watched in this room. It had been of no use to try to hide longer behind the neglects of others. They might not have done their duty, but his eyes being opened he could distinctly see how God himself looking down the years of his life before they had been lived, had planned the way ; given him a father whose memory had been in many ways a blessing ; given him church and Sabbath-school privileges enough to lead him if he had not chosen blindness ; given him a little book two inches square, full of invitations which he had not heeded ; given him Miss Putnam's life of strict integrity, Miss Putnam's Bible which he had treasured and neglected ; Miss Force's unselfish helpfulness ; Dr. Decker's daily practical Christianity — there was no use in trying to count the milestones of the way, yet how certainly it had been marked out for him, strewn with invitations over which he had trod as though they had been weed

up to that culminating hour of his life when it had been as though the very spirit of God had said, "Now gather the threads of the young man's past and present, woven in one complete chain, tighten it about him on this solemn night while the death-angel tarries in the room where he watches, and make one last effort for his soul; *now* the two roads part; now the decision must be made."

"I felt," said Dr. Kelland, telling Dr. Decker something of the story afterwards, "I felt as certain that those repeated appeals from your daughter, from you, from Jarvis, from Mrs. Tryon, and finally from those two remarkable letters, had been planned by an unseen hand to gather about me that night for a final call, as I feel certain now that if I had declined again, I should have had no other call. It was my last invitation home."

There was a peculiar smile on Winter's face as he repeated those last words; a smile whose entire significance Dr. Decker lost, for though Winter told him much about Miss Force and her letter, he had passed over the card enclosed with just a word, and for some reason very vaguely understood by himself, when he put Miss Force's letter carefully away inside Miss Putnam's Bible, he kept the card, enclosed it in a blank envelope, and placed it in the pocket of his private diary which he always carried with him.

"If the Lord would only give me Jarvis' life as a token, for the sake of his poor mother," said

Winter to Dr. Decker, on the evening of the fifth day of watching, "I would give my energies toward trying to help him redeem what he calls a wasted life. Do you think there is any hope at all, Doctor?"

"I do not see a gleam of hope; I believe the Lord has other plans, and he can take care of the mother. I have just been in to see the dear fellow; he is quiet, peaceful, and sinking fast."

At midnight he died. Dr. Kelland was kneeling beside him at the time; Dr. Kelland's voice in prayer followed him to the very threshold of the other world, and his last word had been with a smile: "It is good to know how to pray. I'm glad mother knows."

As the doctor turned to leave the quiet form which needed nothing more from him, a telegram was handed him bearing the young man's name. He tore it open, glanced at it, smiled, and saying only, "I will attend to the reply," left the room and went home.

In the private office was Dr. Decker. Winter stopped with him long enough to say: "Doctor, he is gone. He died at five minutes of twelve. And look here, this telegram was handed me just afterwards. You were right: God took care of the old mother; she was there to meet him — fully two hours ahead of him!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

"THAT BEATS ME!"

A STRANGER might have thought it a special gala day. There were exquisite strains of music rolling up from the lake; there was a grand concert in progress at the amphitheatre; there were bulletins at the Temple corner, announcing all sorts of delights for the evening—there were people and flowers everywhere. Yet it was only one of the regular days of the summer of '87.

"It is a gala year, Elice, in honor of our class; there must be many more here this season than have ever been before."

It was Vine Wilmeth who spoke. Sauntering with her companion down one of the avenues, their attention had been called to the throngs of people coming from the wharf where one of the largest steamers had but a few moments before landed its living freight.

"I hope they will all find pleasant accommodations," Vine said, looking after a group with the thoughtful air of one accustomed to being a care-

taker; then with a little laugh, "but I am glad our house is full; it is so long since we have had any new people there, it would seem like an intrusion on family life. Isn't the pansy bed lovely?"

For at this moment they had reached and paused before the terraced mound aglow with its almost infinite variety of exquisite pansies holding up their faces to catch the spray from the fountain which constantly showered its silver breath over them.

"Lovely!" Miss Force repeated, with a quieter but not less intense enthusiasm.

"Isn't it a lovely world, this world in the woods? Woods still, although a city. How could one who had never seen the place, imagine such a rare combination? I know so many people who are coming here this year, almost as travellers of old made pilgrimages to their shrines: people, you know, who never go anywhere; who are and have been all their lives, toilers, yet having large hearts and strong aspirations; people to whom this visit will be a revelation, a foretaste of the blessed land, an uplifting for which their souls will be the stronger forever: I *like* this year."

"I should quite think you might! You imagine that I do not know the story of the years which have preceded it, so far as your part is concerned, because you have been so quiet about it; but there *are* people who can write letters, Elice, and a few persons come here each year from New England, and *talk*; I know ever so many of your lovely se-

crets. I know about the circle which sends delegates this year — six girls who have never been from their busy homes for a week's 'outing' before. I know about two young men who bring their seventy-year-old mother with them, to look on, while they receive their diplomas. I know about the entire circle from that little farming community among the hills, away back from the railroad. I have been over to the houses they are to occupy, and I helped arrange the nice maiden lady's room; oh! you have been very shy and still, but the birds told me, and the waves, and, above all, the flowers — pansies, you know. How busy you have been! And how beautiful the flowers of your ideas must be to you.”

“Not my ideas at all, Vine dear; you planted almost every one of them that moonlight evening when we sat in the Hall together.”

“And found moths! I did; and was quite unacquainted with certain ‘beams’ which were making me as blind as a bat. I have learned some things since then, Elice. With my eyes quite open I have stared about me a good deal, and found that silent influences were at work, for which I had been giving no credit. Those girls, you remember, whom I criticised for being so eager about their ‘skeptic’ joining the circle — they secured him, and while he was reading the Bible in the Nineteenth Century he was converted; they told me about it after I grew intimate with them. One of

them said when that book was in the list for the month, it seemed to her that she prayed all the time; she was so anxious to have it reach certain minds. Now I should never have known that if I hadn't just *chanced* across it."

"And yet, what you said was strictly true, and much more could be done if all these ways of working were consecrated. Much more will be done in the future. This Pansy Class is going out strong for service."

The two friends were now nearing the lake. This was one of their long, rambling walks and talks. They were having their first week together since that summer of '84. Three years before when Vine had said good-by to Miss Force, it had been with the expectation of greeting her among the earliest comers of the following summer, but plans went awry, as so often happens in our experiences, and summers and winters had intervened before they met again. Of course there was much to talk over, for the two, though they had chosen each other almost suddenly, were not of the kind who would be likely ever to drop apart again, no matter how widely separated; neither, on the other hand, were they very regular correspondents; they lived too busy lives for that. So the letters, though warm and full, had been few, and there were many scattered threads to gather. But two days after that September morning on which they had separated, Vine had held a letter in her hand, addressed

in peculiarly graceful chirography, — “Miss Elice Force.”

“What pretty writing,” she had said, as she studied it for a moment; then she had drawn her pen over part of the address, added another, and sent the letter forward, never dreaming that she had held for a moment the link between her and her childhood friend. Sometime afterwards she heard about this letter :

“O Vine! you remember our ‘arrow shot at a venture’? It found its mark. My boy, a man now, and a physician, writes me that it, the letter, was one of the special cords by which the Holy Spirit drew him homeward. The circumstances by which he was surrounded that night when our letter reached him, were very marked and peculiar. When I have more leisure I will tell you the story, or perhaps I will leave it until we meet; meantime, he sent his special thanks to his ‘stranger friend’.”

More than this of the story had not yet been told to Vine. There were so many things to talk about, and it was such a busy world. They flitted from one subject to another rapidly, this afternoon, almost childishly glad over being together again; yet they had eyes and ears for much which was going on about them, and often broke off in the midst of sentences to say: “Look at that beautiful old face!” or, “Notice that happy girl! Isn’t this evidently her first visit here? and isn’t she realizing a castle which she thought was built in the air?”

"And what next, Vine?" Miss Force asked, following one of these interruptions.

"What next? After I have passed the golden gate, you mean?" with a happy little laugh. "Oh! the next thing, whatever it may be. I feel quite content to live on here, doing little things, from day to day, and letting the great ones hover all about me; there are great events evolving all the time out of what we call 'little things.' My life is summer sunshine, nowadays, Elice, all winter long. Mrs. Griggs is a fixture and a comfort; clock-work represents her kitchen arrangements, and she is conscientious even about mashing potatoes; I have learned to respect her religion. I ought to respect her, we are classmates, you know; we graduate together. Think of it!" The laugh rang out merrily now.

"Well, but seriously, Elice, she knows a great deal more than she did, and respects herself more, I believe, than she ever would have done without the readings. And the *rest* that she has been to mother is something to make me grateful forever. Oh! I think we shall live on, just as we have been doing; father does not entirely approve of the boarders. He says they are unnecessary now that his business has an assured foundation, but mother likes to make people comfortable, now that she has Mrs. Griggs at the helm. Elice, have you noticed that family party? They have been here for a day or two. The elder gentleman is a physician; his

name is Decker—Doctor Norman Decker. Dr. Landress says he is very celebrated. I think he is fine looking. That pretty girl is his daughter; I heard her call him papa. I don't know whether the young man is his son, but I imagine not; he doesn't resemble them, and he gives the sort of attention which as a rule a son and brother does not. Do you like to imagine about people, Elice?”

“Miss Force!” called a clear voice, at a little distance.

“There! you are being summoned. One of your innumerable girls wants to know which dress she shall be perfectly distracting in to-night, or something equally important. How happy all those girls are. You can afford to fold your hands, Elice Force, after this, and enjoy the harvest which will result from your gathering them all here this summer.”

“I can't afford not to go to Callie at once,” said Miss Force, laughing; “the child is bubbling over with all sorts of sweet impossible things which she wants to try to do. Will you wait here for me?”

A few moments' consultation with the white-robed maiden, while Vine waited, and the family party whose faces interested her, drew nearer, then Miss Force's voice floated back on the breeze, —

“Vine, will you go down by the shore and sit while I run back to the house for a few minutes?”

Vine nodded. The young man belonging to the “family party” turned suddenly, and fixed upon

her such a prolonged and altogether unexpected stare, that her face flushed under it, and she quickened her steps toward the rustic seats by the shore. A few moments more and he had turned abruptly from his companions and was following her. She was quite near the seat now — her favorite resting place.

"I beg your pardon," — the voice was quick, and eager, but courteous, and his hat was uplifted, — "I beg your pardon for the intrusion, but is it, isn't it Vine Wilmeth?"

"That is my name." Fair, cold dignity; a lady, but an astonished one.

"Then surely you ought to know me; you can't have forgotten! I am Winter Kelland — your old friend Win."

Forgotten! Who told the tell-tale blood to spread itself in such rich waves all over the fair face of this bewildered Vine?

What did they say next? and next? and next as they sat for a full half-hour under the trees by the shore?

Do you imagine I am going to tell you? Not but that all the world might have heard, that is just the point; so commonplace, so matter-of-course, the talk; you can imagine it:

"Where?" "When?" "Who?" "Why?" Just variations to the tune of those words: a road gone over as surely by every company of friends between whom fourteen years of silence have

rolled ; very commonplace indeed. Why should I trouble you with it ? Yet do you imagine that it ever seems commonplace to the people who with flushed cheeks and earnest eyes are rapidly telling it over ?

“ It is unaccountable ! ” said Dr. Kelland eagerly — it was the next day, and they were sitting together, he and Vine, in her mother’s parlor. They had talked long the day before. Miss Force had not returned to the shore, but had sent a young girl to report that she was most unavoidably detained, and Winter Kelland, hearing her name, gave again an astonished start, and had more eager questions to ask ; but for reasons best known to himself, having received a card with Miss Force’s address, beyond the general statement that he thought he might find in her an old acquaintance, he kept his own counsel.

I may as well remark in passing, that he renewed his acquaintance with the lady that very evening, an occasional correspondence having been kept up during the years, but this was their first meeting.

Among other questions were these : “ And now, Miss Force, may I ask, was not the lady who sent me that ‘ invitation home,’ Miss Vine Wilmeth ? ”

“ And if she were, Dr. Kelland, would I have a right to give you the information ? ”

“ Perhaps not,” with a grave smile, “ though I should suppose any lady might be proud of having tried to do such work, but I will not ask it ; I will

only ask if that lady knows my name in connection with those letters, or in connection with you, in any way?"

"So far as I know, she has never heard it."

"Then, may I ask you as a special favor to keep this matter, so far as it relates to the past, in confidence for the present? I assure you I have no unworthy motive in making the request. And now I want to tell you that Miss Wilmeth is a friend of my childhood — my only friend, I might say."

"I wonder if you may possibly be the boy who went away when she was eight, and he was twelve?"

"I suspect I am that very boy," and he gave Miss Force such a peculiarly suggestive smile that she looked after him as he went with swift steps down the walk a little later, and said all to her secret self, "I tried to weave a pretty little romance for my sweet Vine, and behold the hand of God had set the frame and arranged the threads long years before!"

And now you know the rest of the story. "Commonplace again?" Yes, very commonplace: being repeated somewhere, every hour of every day as the steady years go by, but I leave it to you whether *that* story of all others, is likely to be commonplace to the persons immediately concerned? For the others, they do well to stay outside.

Yet I will finish Dr. Kelland's remark.

"It is unaccountable," he said, "the manner in which I have been led! If I had not, with all my

soul, been a believer in an Over-ruling Hand, I must have been converted by an honest look at my own history. “Why, Miss Vine, it would make a volume of amazing history!”

And then he turned historian at once, and told her much, in brief, and badly, of what you already know, having lived it with him. “And to think how this circle has wound itself about me and encircled and entangled me when I least suspected it, has been above all things strange. That boy on the fence, must have been here the first summer of this development; he must have caught here the spirit which moved him to speak those unusual words to me. That book, that physiology which I told you was the instrument chosen of God to set my very soul on fire; but before that, a stray paper fell into my hand, having parts of sentences on it, which — wait! let me show you the very paper.”

And he drew from his diary the torn bit, and read:—“Struggle into opportunity. There are valiant souls who without family prestige, without incitement on the part of father or mother, seem early in life to take a wide view, feel the necessity, and say, ‘By God’s help, with our own right hand, and what brain-power we have, we will attain what culture we can.’ And those hard-working fellows manage to go through college. They fight their way up into power: and while —”

“That is all,” he said, his face aglow, and his eyes flashing with intense feeling.

"Why, that," said Vine, "sounds like — it seems as though — yes, I am sure I have heard it before, on these grounds!"

"You are right," he said eagerly; "it was only a few months ago a friend of mine gave me a book to read in order to post me more thoroughly in regard to this movement, for I confess to you that until very recently, although I have been a careful reader of the books, I have been ignorant of its machinery, or location, or local schemes; I am a very busy man, and have done my reading by snatches, and alone; well, she lent me the book, and I glanced it through in haste, until I came upon some words that I had found years before in a scrap of newspaper, — words which had burned at white heat into my heart; and I found them selections from the first graduating address on these grounds, given by the leader himself! Was not that overwhelming? And indeed I could give you other facts equally amazing."

But about the arithmetic, and the algebra, and Miss Force, he was entirely silent.

Vine attempted a question: "Was the circle in any way helpful to you as a Christian, Dr. Kelland? Have you been a Christian during all these years?"

He shook his head: "No; I have been a Christian hardly three years. Yes, the circle was directly and mysteriously instrumental in leading me by remarkable and unseen and unimagined processes up to the moment of decision; sometime, Miss

Vine, if you will let me, I should like to tell you that story. But I want to tell you now, what an idiot I have been about location. During these later years, when I have often heard the name of these headquarters, I have said occasionally: 'I was born in the county which bears that name, yet I knew little of its geography when I left that region, and I never heard of the place you mention!' And I did not know, I did not *dream* until the moment when the steamer rounded the point on this very lake, that it was our old woods where we began, that day, to make a city!"

He was intensely excited over his own story. And in Vine's eyes there was a peculiar light.

But I am not going to tell *you* the rest of the story. They lived it; they lived hard and fast. Pretty Sate Decker complained with pouting lips that adopted brothers were like all other brothers, they went away with other sisters, and left her to console herself with a brother-in-law and a father. It was true; Dr. Kelland spent all the hours at his command among his old friends.

They walked, and rowed, and sang, and listened, together; they looked forward together to that wonderful day when they should pass through the golden gate, and join in the recognition song.

One evening, one love's evening, just at the sunset hour, they had walked, he and Vine, around under the hill, and up the hill, and come out beside the white-pillared hall and stopped under one of

the tallest trees, and looked about them, and were silent. Dr. Kelland took off his hat and looked up reverently to the very top of the tall tree, beyond the top, into the blue of heaven.

"The hall was not here that day," he said at last, "but the tree was, and the date in the tree. Do you remember?"

But Vine said not a word.

"And we planned it," he added eagerly. "Don't you know we planned it? This, you said, was the prettiest spot in all the grove, and *our* building must be here; room enough in it for me. You surely remember it?"

Vine's cheeks were aflame, and there was no sort of reply.

"Vine, look here;" he drew from the pocket of his private diary a little card. "This is not heaven, yet to me it is almost a glorious foretaste, and I cannot wait for the real heaven; I want to anticipate. You told me to come to you there and say, 'You see I have accepted the invitation, and come home.' I say it now and here; it was your invitation which I accepted at last — *my* little Vine! isn't it? May I say it?"

I shall not tell you *what* she said; it is not fair. You should not be at the Hall of Philosophy just now. There are enough other places for you to visit; be courteous, and move away.

"You said you could not call me 'Mr. Kelland,'" the young doctor exclaimed merrily, some time

after his last-quoted statement. "Don't you know you were sure you could not? So I had to secure a title for your only sake. Is it easier to say Doctor, my little Vine? You said you were sure I would win. I meant to then, and I mean to now."

"And I'll tell you, Vine, another thing," — this was an hour later, — "I mean to have, I *surely* mean to have that birthday supper. Haven't I waited for it long enough? Those potatoes — they must certainly be almost ready. O Vine! let it be the birthday feast. Will you, little Vine?"

They walked back decorously enough; you met them, I think more than likely, in the avenue which leads from the hall to the auditorium; you may have met them yesterday, you may meet them to-morrow; you will not know what the trees and the flowers say to them; you will not know how every pansy blossom you wear seems to blossom again in their hearts: *they* will never tell.

There is planning going on in the Wilmeth home. It is all a little bewildering, the poor mother thinks — her *one* daughter.

"But you know you invited me to the birthday supper, dear Mrs. Wilmeth," pleads the doctor, "and I could not bring it to pass before, and I cannot wait longer; besides, Vine told me, fourteen years ago, that she meant to be married the day she was twenty-two, just as her mother was!"

And Mrs. Griggs — during these days when

others are busy about the processions, and the flowers, and the arches, and the golden gate — Mrs. Griggs is forecasting that birthday, wedding-day supper.

"Baked potatoes!" she says, in dumb amaze, "who ever heard the like! If 'twas anybody but Elviny and Wint Kelland, I couldn't and *wouldn't* believe it, but they always was the queerest pieces, and just cut out for each other. I used to say it as long ago as when they was forever together every chance they could get. I always expected something or other nice of Wint — I'll say that for him; and as for Elviny, there ain't a girl in this world that — But baked potatoes for a weddin' supper! That beats me!"



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